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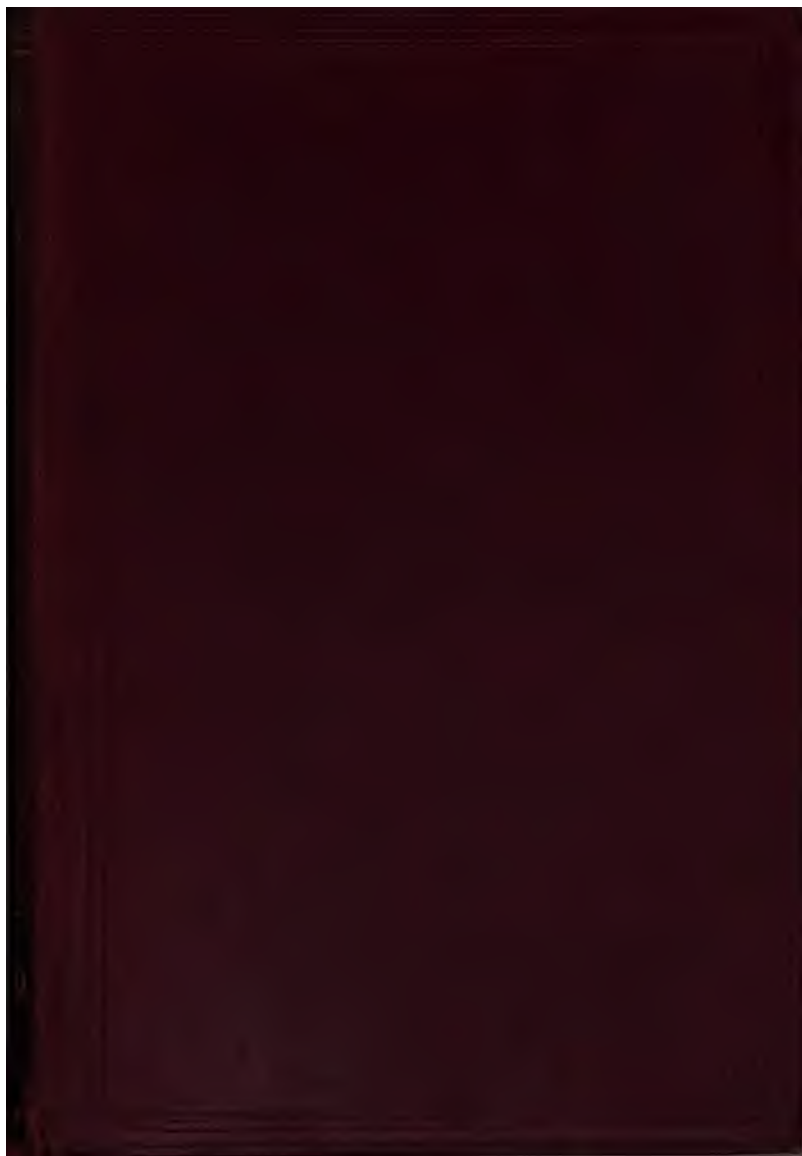
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CHRISTIAN WORK

FOR

GENTLE HANDS:

THOUGHTS ON FEMALE AGENCY IN
THE CHURCH OF GOD.

BY

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I.

Introductory.



IN the preaching of the gospel we are so much accustomed to deal with mixed

congregations, that there is danger of the direct and powerful application of truth to the different

*Various
classes usually
addressed to-
gether.*

classes of which they are composed being overlooked. Both in the appeals of the minister, and in the way in which the truth is regarded by the people, it is to be feared that the particular is not

unfrequently lost in the general—that

Dangers connected with it.

in endeavouring to do good to all, few or none may, in some cases, be really or permanently benefited. So

far as this may be the case, it is matter of serious regret; and it must be admitted that some effort should be made to remedy the defect. Perhaps something might be accomplished by modify-

Topics of Pulpit Teaching.

ing the topics dwelt upon in the pulpit, so as to make its teachings more practical in their tendency,

with a fuller application of the Word of God to the ordinary relations and affairs of life. The conviction is in many minds that, if this were done—not by the introduction of a slang phraseology, which we would exclude from our social circles, and which we would not suffer to pollute our children's lips, but—by the discussion of topics of common interest in a dignified and scriptural, but

easy and familiar, style, its popular and effective influence would be immensely increased. But, however this may be, the press is open; and, through the channel thus

The Press.

supplied, the dangers and duties, the pursuits and privileges of each class in the community, as they affect each member in the Church of Christ, may be discussed freely, and with advantage.

If there is a class which, more than another, is passed over, so

far as public addresses

furnish a criterion by

*Females
usually passed
over.*

which to judge, it is

the *female* portion of the Church's membership. To others, special attention is frequently directed. To men, the weight of public instruction is addressed; and young men are often singled out for useful and important counsel; while sermons are preached even to children with happy effect. This is not matter for regret, but for sincere satisfaction.

The cause for regret is found in the fact that attention is for the most part confined to these ; that, at all events, it is not frequently directed to those to whom I venture to address myself in these pages.

And yet, for many reasons, women have strong claims upon the consideration and labours of all who study to advance the interests of religion. They undoubtedly form the majority in our churches and congregations ; they fill positions of vast moment to the present and to future generations ; and they, in general, receive counsel more freely, are more easily induced to seek Divine grace, and usually employ it with a readiness and effect, not often found in connexion with man's sterner nature.

Subjects not about to be discussed. There are several subjects which it is not intended to discuss in the

following pages, although the writer does not hesitate, when necessary, to avow his decided opinion respecting some of them.

One of these is the question of "*Woman's Rights.*" Its advocates are quite able to set forth, and to maintain their own views ; and, if not very numerous, they are sufficiently determined and outspoken to do their theory every justice. My own impression is, that success would be fatal to their professed aim ; that it would have the effect of withdrawing woman from her proper sphere ; and, by introducing her into one for which she is not so well fitted, and in which she would fill a subordinate place, of inevitably lowering instead of exalting her.

Another subject, which may be regarded as having some degree of affinity to that about to be dwelt upon, is the question of *Conventual Establishments.*

Conventual Establishments. With these I have no degree of sympathy. While the female religious orders of the Church of Rome, and those connected with the Established Church of England, may differ in several and very important respects, they agree in separating woman from the domestic circle, and in placing her in a position of unsocial and injurious isolation. She is thus prevented from accomplishing the particular good which she was designed to effect, and—substituting an imaginary sanctity for a real consecration—is placed in a position which is unnatural, and fraught with danger to herself and others.

Nor is it proposed critically to examine the *comparative intellectual power of man and woman.* I may, however, say that I by no means concur in the verdict implied in the conduct of a young minister, who, when

he was, on one occasion, appointed to address a week-night congregation in a small town, actually changed his text, and substituted an unprepared exhortation for the sermon he had intended to deliver, when he perceived that his audience was entirely composed of females. Probably the two sexes cannot be fairly compared in this respect, inasmuch as their respective qualities of mind are so different. I am content to adopt in a general way the idea which has been frequently expressed, that if man be represented as the "Head," chiefly distinguished by intellectual power, woman may justly be considered the "Heart," manifesting in her various relations in life pure and constant affection; not, however, by any means confining to the former all power to think or reason, or giving to the latter a monopoly in the department of feeling.

*Man, the
"Head;" wo-
man, the
"Heart."*

This little volume is not intended to furnish a general epitome of female duty. This has been done by others.

Woman's duty at large not considered.

The general subject will be only referred to so far as may seem to be absolutely necessary in bringing out one particular view of it—*the obligation resting upon Christian women to work for God.* This is

One branch of it—working for God. in many instances overlooked altogether, and in

others but partially understood and attended to; and the consequence is, that much of the Church's strength—and that its most valuable and effective portion—is either lost or used with little result. Other objects are set before females as claiming to be thought of before usefulness, and often to its entire exclusion. Some of them are desirable and necessary, while others are not worthy of a Christian woman's pursuit; but none of them should be

permitted to supersede the Master's call to duty. My design is to ask the attention of my sisters in Christ to the importance of active service ; and to set before them what they may *do*, as well as what they may *be*, with the hope that the Church of Christ may, to a larger extent than it has yet done, profit by their vigorous and self-denying labours to promote the glory of God.

I speak of *Woman's Work* in the Church of Christ. In fastidious ears this word may sound less musical than some designation which custom leads us to regard as more refined, and may by some be even condemned as harsh. But I employ it advisedly. My intention is to address the female sex in general, including every grade in society, as composing a common sisterhood, sharing equally many of the sorrows and trials peculiar to

" Women "
addressed, and
why.

"the weaker vessel,"¹ as well as her chief joys, equally redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, equally called to fill the post of duty assigned to her ; and only separated by matters of comparatively trifling moment. The idea is too common that the active Christian service in which woman can engage is reserved for those of exalted station and independent means. Such, no doubt, have a wider field and greater influence ; and it is a blessed thing to find them consecrating rank, as well as every other endowment, to the service of so good a Master. But the privilege is not theirs exclusively, neither is the responsibility. Had our Saviour only permitted the "ladies" of the land to serve Him, He would have had but few female disciples. My sisters in an humble rank of life must not deny themselves the privilege and reward intended for them.

¹ 1 Peter iii. 7.

“The Master of all
For your service doth call,
And deigns to approve,
With smiles of acceptance,
Your labour of love.”

And it is for *Christian* Women that
these pages are intended—

for those who personally *Christian
Women ad-
dressed.*
enjoy the power of godli-
ness. *They* are accessible

to the lessons taught by the Word of
God, and should be duly influenced by
its authoritative announcements, and
ever anxious to obey its precepts. To
them the motives drawn from the cross
of Christ appeal with prevailing power.
Their view is not bounded by the things
of time, but stretches forward into eter-
nity. Selfish interests and ends do not
wholly occupy *their* thoughts; *they* “can
have compassion on the ignorant, and
on them that are out of the way.”¹
Much has been already done by devoted
Christian females, and every day they

¹ Hebrews v. 2.

are accomplishing still more for the glory of God. But many who might lend a helping hand remain unmoved and inactive; in some cases, probably, because they do not perceive the obligation which rests upon them to work for God; and in others, because they are unwilling to take up the cross, and to bear the misrepresentation, and, in extreme cases, the derision and contempt, which a course of Christian activity will not unfrequently involve.

To such I most respectfully, but most earnestly appeal. My sisters in the gospel of Christ, the world is too wicked, and the Church is too weak, to afford even the shadow of an excuse for dispensing with the service which you can render. Souls are too precious, and eternity is too near, to justify you in allowing any minor considerations to hold you back from the blessed toil to which your Master calls you. Your present spiritual prosperity, and your future re-

ward, are too intimately affected by the course which you adopt, to permit you without danger to treat this question as one of secondary importance. Let me ask of you carefully and prayerfully to study the chapters which follow, looking for the teaching of that Divine Comforter promised by Jesus himself, to "guide" all His loving and obedient children "into all truth."¹

¹ John xvi. 13.





II.

Motives to Activity.

BEFORE proceeding to other considerations, a few out of the many reasons which might be enumerated may be adduced to shew *why* the female members of the Church of Christ should work for God, and esteem it a privilege and honour to be thus employed. In doing so, it is not necessary to dwell upon those which apply to all the members of the Church of Christ in common. Nevertheless, let it be borne in mind that these may be urged in

*Arguments
of general ap-
plication in-
clude females.*

reference to women as strongly as to men, especially those arguments, so weighty and impressive, which are drawn from *redemption*. These should touch every heart, and nerve all to effort; "for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich!"¹

But to fix our minds more particularly on those which apply exclusively or chiefly to the female sex, let it be remembered that *Christianity has conferred on woman advantages of the most valuable description.* *Advantages derived by woman from Christianity.*

Surrounded as we now are by most gratifying evidences of the favourable circumstances in which woman is placed, we find it hard to conceive that she ever was so degraded as authentic testimony

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

declares her to have been ; or, indeed,

Her degradation under other systems.

as she is still in other lands, and under other systems. Man in a state of barbarism usually treats

woman as his slave. The drudgery devolves upon her ; she does the work of the labourer, and even of the beast of burden ; while he assumes a lordly superiority such as it was never intended he should claim, and spends his time in idleness, or in what he esteems the nobler pursuits of the chase and of war. And in countries which are in some degree removed from a state of unmitigated savageism her position is only altered, not improved. She is there usually regarded merely as ministering to man's voluptuous pleasures, while, at the same time, all liberty of thought or action is denied to her ; education is withheld from her ; and she is treated, sometimes in theory, and for the most part in practice, as one who has no soul.

And even when a place has been assigned to her in religious systems and rites, the vestal virgins of antiquity, and the heathen priestesses of modern days, are witnesses to prove that it has been one of gross impurity and fearful degradation; while the burning and burial of widows in India demonstrate that the tendency of heathenism, even in our own times, is to superadd the most barbarous cruelty.

Nor can a more favourable statement, on the whole, be made respecting other systems with which we come into too close contact in the present day. *Mohammedanism* contemplates woman only in the basest and most sensual point of view; it dandles her as a toy in the harem, but denies her admission to heaven. *Socialism*—so sadly miscalled—seeks to sever the social tie, and to overturn the family relation, and thus most effectually to rob the female character of its purity, and trample its honour in the mire. And *Mormonism*—

perhaps the most monstrous iniquity of all—dares unblushingly to advocate polygamy, quoting the sacred Scriptures in its support, appealing for arguments in its favour to the public weal and the promotion of morality, and actually exhibiting it as a virtue. Let Christian women think of the female infants destroyed almost as soon as born,—of the widows slaughtered by cruel rites,—of the degradation of their sex in every land where the gospel of Christ is not honoured, and by every system which does not teach us to adore the name of Jesus,—and then let them ask what is the extent of their obligations to its just and beneficent influence. Truly does the Rev. John Angell James, in addressing them, observe,—“Your obligations to Christianity are immense. You owe infinitely more to it than you ever reflect upon, or than you will ever be able to cancel!”¹

¹ “The Young Woman’s Guide,” -

And that it may be perceived that it is indeed to Christianity our acknowledgments are due for these altered and happy circumstances, let us dwell for a moment on the clearly-defined advantages which it confers upon the female sex. It announces the great principle of *Equality as regards reli-*

gious privilege and blessing

in reference to man and woman. "There is neither

Christianity bestows equality of religious privilege.

Jew nor Greek, there is

neither bond nor free, *there is neither male nor female*: for ye are *all one in Christ Jesus*." ¹ Mr James observes re-

specting this passage,—“Here is woman’s charter of all the blessings of salvation ; here is woman’s proof of equal consideration in the sight of God ; here is woman’s claim to her just rank in the institutes of man. Christianity places the wife by the side of the husband the daughter by the side of the father, the

¹ Gal. iii. 28.

sister by the side of the brother, at the altar of the family, in the meeting of the church, at the table of the Lord, and in the congregation of the sanctuary. Male and female meet together at the cross, and will meet in the realms of glory."

The general tendency of Scripture, and the uniform effect of Christianity,

*Teaching of
Scripture.*

unite in exalting woman.
This is done, not by ful-
some adulation or insin-

cere flattery, but by benign and practical injunctions and arrangements. By the gospel *Polygamy* is effectively abo-

*Polygamy
abolished.*

lished. We never read of
"wives" in the New Tes-
tament in connexion with

one household, but we constantly meet with the term "wife." And we find respect and honour paid to this relation, amounting even to sacredness, for it supplies the illustration which is used to represent the mystical union that

subsists between Christ and His Church.¹

By the gospel *Licentiousness* is rebuked, and the *Licentiousness rebuked.*

highest description of purity—purity in thought and feeling, as

well as in action—is enjoined.²

By the gospel the institution of *Marriage* is dignified and guarded.

Christ performed His first miracle at a marriage feast.³ He also drew *Marriage dignified and guarded.*

from it in some instances His most striking and beautiful illustrations; see

the parable of the wise and foolish virgins,⁴ and that of the marriage supper.⁵

He likewise distinctly taught⁶ that it

is a union which was intended to subsist

between two persons only, that it was

to supersede all other relationships, that

it was instituted by God, and that it

was to be indissoluble, except in the

¹ Eph. v. 23-32.

⁴ Matt. xxv. 1-13.

² Matt. v. 27, 28.

⁵ Matt. xxii. 1-14.

³ John ii. 1-11.

⁶ Matt. xix. 3-9.

case of extreme and aggravated sin. By the gospel also the *Family Circle* is organised, the place of each member being marked out, and the duties devolving on the several individuals composing it exhibited and enforced. Whatever, therefore, Christian females enjoy in the happiness of home, in the endearments of social life, or in the respect which they receive and the estimation in which they are held, as contrasted with the treatment of their sex in the systems alluded to, may all be gratefully ascribed to the gospel of Christ, which scatters blessing and joy wherever its hallowing and gladdening influence extends. How much, then, my sisters, do you owe to it! How great is your obligation to make known its worth, both that you may magnify its Author, and benefit your race!

And, further, I may refer to the *Honour* put upon the female sex by

Christ while upon earth.

How condescending and
gracious was His conver-
sation with the woman of

*Respect paid
to woman by
Christ.*

Samaria!¹ How familiar and gentle
His intercourse with the sisters of Be-
thany!² How kindly did He commend
the females with whom He met, when
their conduct was praiseworthy; as in
the case of the Syrophenician woman;³
or of that humble but devoted woman
who "washed His feet with tears" and
anointed them with the precious oint-
ment;⁴ or of the poor widow who cast
her "two mites" into the treasury!⁵
And how tenderly did He reprove them
when reproof was required; as in the
case of the woman taken in adultery!⁶
In His treatment of this extreme case
is displayed no haughty assumption, no

¹ John iv. 7-30.

² John xi. 1-46; and Luke x. 38-42.

³ Mark vii. 25-30.

⁴ Mark xii. 41-44.

⁵ Luke vii. 36-50.

⁶ John viii. 3-11.

supercilious contempt, such as those persons displayed who brought her to Jesus ; but such mercy and gentleness as, while it by no means excused her sin, effectually rebuked her accusers, and cheered her stricken heart. Our blessed Lord ever treats the females referred to in the gospel narrative as standing on a similar footing with His male disciples, and as being worthy of equal consideration and regard.

If, then, any are called to be willing
and active workers for
Women's duty God, surely women are
of gratitude. so called by the loudest

voice which can appeal to the conscience of an intelligent and responsible creature—an infinite debt of obligation, one that can never be repaid. Rescued from ignorance and indignity, exalted and honoured by Christianity, it claims from them a practical acknowledgment—such as will make it known that the gospel has ennobled and refined them,

as widely as their degradation was previously declared.

Further, all are regarded, by the express teaching of Scripture, as *witnesses for God*. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord;"¹ and *no exception* is made by which *All are witnesses.* woman is relieved of the duty, or, I should rather say, denied the privilege, of bearing her testimony.

An American Congregational minister writes: "When God says, 'Ye are my witnesses,' He addresses His people, and lays a responsibility upon every one of them. He reveals Himself to them, and they are to make Him known. As they believed through the word of others, so they are to speak that others may believe through their word. Every man, woman, and child, who knows the love of Christ, and has a tongue to speak, can and ought to tell of the blessedness they know. In the several

¹ Isaiah xliii. 10.

situations and spheres of action in which God has placed them, let each one confess Christ, and give to others, by their word of testimony, all that they know about Him. None can be silent without suffering loss."

It is probable that this view of duty will be generally accepted by professing Christians; but it is doubtful if it is as generally attended to with conscientious fidelity. There is room to fear that some forget the word of solemn caution that is written, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."¹

But my main point just now is, not so much to enforce the duty of witnessing for God, as to shew that the obligation to do so rests upon the *female*, as well as upon the

Includes female members of the Church of Christ.

¹ Luke ix. 26.

male members of the Church of Christ. In proof of this, let it be observed that there is no distinction made in the scriptures which enforce it; as, for example, the parable of the Talents;¹ or that of the Labourers of the Vineyard.² Indeed, our Lord appeared to put special honour upon female agency, by employing it on very important occasions; particularly by committing to women the work of announcing the fact of His resurrection to those who were afterwards to declare and defend this truth throughout the world.

And shall the female membership of the Church of Christ now refuse their testimony to His glory? If they should wilfully withhold it, disastrous results must ensue, both to themselves and to the Church at large; nevertheless, it is quite possible that many may have done so. No reference is at present made to the way in which this testimony is to be

¹ Matt. xxv. 14-30.

² Matt. xx. 1-16.

borne ; it is simply intended to assert the truth that woman is to be a witness for God equally with man. Instead of sealing her lips in silence, or putting her to fill an uninfluential place amongst professing Christians, is it not more fitting that she should be encouraged everywhere gratefully and joyfully to exclaim,

“ And shall we not sing
Our Saviour and King ?
Thy Witnesses, we

With rapture ascribe our salvation to Thee ! ”

Again, *Woman's Qualifications for Usefulness* furnish strong

Woman's Qualifications for Usefulness. reasons for her active employment in the Church of God. In nature every part of Jehovah's handiwork has its use ; and the same rule obtains in the operations of Divine grace. While there is not anything deficient, there is not anything redundant. And when the gifts bestowed are of a superior order, either

as regards quality or adaptation, we have evidence to lead us to believe that there is a corresponding sphere of action supplied by Him who bestowed them, in which they are to be exercised to His praise. Our effort should be to discover that sphere, and when we have found it, to fill it to the utmost of our power. That qualifications of a peculiarly valuable description are possessed by woman, and qualifications which must have been intended to do important service, will very plainly appear.

Consider the well-known *Susceptibility* of her nature. This not only fits her for the various positions in domestic life which she is to fill, but it likewise constitutes her more sensible to Divine impressions than man is; it makes her more quick in apprehending the truth presented by the Word of God, and through the operations of the Holy Spirit, and usually enables her to exer-

*Woman's
Susceptibility.*

cise a nicer discrimination in reference to it, and to catch more correctly and fully its spiritual lessons. She consequently acquires, in many instances, a conviction of the evil of sin, and of the misery of Adam's race by reason of transgression, much more keen than that which is commonly possessed by man ; and realises a more vivid perception of the provision made by redeeming love, and of the privileges flowing from it. She perceives the readiest mode of gaining access to the hearts of those whom she would benefit, and at the same time exercises a power, not so much of conviction as of persuasion, which frequently prevails where sterner qualities have proved insufficient.

Closely allied to this is *Woman's Love*.

*Woman's
Love.*

It is proverbial, so that when David in his lament for Jonathan would describe the devoted attachment which subsisted between him and his fallen

friend, he exclaims, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."¹ A popular writer² observes, "Woman loves more readily than man; and her love usually rises to a height which man's seldom attains. Her love is such that it leads her to lose herself in its object." This is truly where woman's "great strength" lies. Whatever be the class of duties which occupies her attention, she is mighty through the power of love. And is not this an invaluable qualification in the great work of winning souls?—one which is in complete accordance with the spirit of the gospel of Christ?—one which is a sure earnest of success?

And with this is connected *deep and tender Sympathy*. The writer just mentioned re-
Woman's Sympathy.
marks concerning this feature of woman's character, "Woman's heart, in this respect, much more than

¹ 2 Samuel i. 26.² Rev. W. Landels.

man's, resembles His in whom manhood was perfected. So natural is it for her to feel for the suffering, that an unfeeling woman is regarded as a reproach to her sex." This makes her presence and kindly aid essential in the chamber of affliction, so that her place there cannot be filled by any substitute which wealth can purchase. This bids her welcome to the habitation where sorrow has burst its floodgates, that she may dry—as she only of all human comforters can—the streaming tears. Where man's hard nature and wise but chilly counsels would but make grief more intense, woman's loving spirit and words of simple-hearted kindness have often assuaged its bitterness, as she gently wiped those tears away. And will any Christian woman say, "I will not soothe the sorrows of the all but broken heart ; I will not use for the benefit of my stricken sister, or my bowed-down brother, that nature with which God has gifted me ?"

And that this quality is of essential service in the efforts of woman for the salvation of souls, is capable of abundant illustration. In a recent number of a widely-circulated periodical, a circumstance of this kind is narrated. A Christian lady, living in one of our large cities, was passing a gin-palace just as the barman was thrusting a young man into the street. Perceiving him to be very young, but haggard and excited, she laid her hand upon his arm, and spoke in a gentle, loving voice, asking him what was the matter. He started, and turned quickly round, became paler than before, and trembled from head to foot. He surveyed the lady for a moment, and then said with a sigh, "I thought it was my mother's voice, it sounded so strangely like it; but she has been dead for many years." A short conversation followed, which comprised a confession of sin and degradation on his part, and some tender and

encouraging counsel on hers, as she told him of God's love to sinners. By this time the door of her house had been reached, and they parted. A few years after, a stranger called upon this worthy woman ; at first she did not recognise him, but he soon made himself known as the person whom she had that evening accosted. From that hour he had changed his course ; he repented of his sins and returned to God, and from being a degraded profligate became a prosperous and happy man. The lady's words on becoming acquainted with the result of her simple effort are beautiful and suggestive :—" Thank God ! I never dreamed there was such power in a few kind words ; and surely, ever after this, I shall take more pains to speak them to all the sad and suffering ones I meet in the walks of life."

Nor do woman's love and sympathy evaporate in feeling, however tender, or in words, however kind. She is *self-*

sacrificing to an almost inconceivable degree. Her happiness seems chiefly

Woman's Self-sacrifice.

to consist in making others happy ; and the true woman is ever found willing to forego personal gratification or advantage, and even to endure suffering or loss, if she can thereby promote the interests of those she loves. How suited is such a character, sanctified and exalted by grace, to bear a prominent part in seeking the "lost sheep," who must often be recovered to the fold of "the Good Shepherd" at the expense of patient and self-denying toil ! Especially are such efforts needed to reach those of her own sex who have to be followed further than most men are willing to go in quest of them, and pleaded with as few men are able to plead.

Woman's *Fidelity* is also very conspicuous. Her devotion to the cause which she espouses, or to the per-

Woman's Fidelity.

son whom she loves, is most intense and enduring. "Many waters cannot quench her love, neither can floods drown it." This was remarkably manifested in the history of Christ. Betrayed by one trusted follower, denied by another, and forsaken by all, woman clung to Him as closely as it was possible for her to do, and took the very earliest opportunity after His crucifixion of testifying her attachment to Him; facing the fury of His foes to perform the offices of kindness to the body of her revered and beloved Master and Lord.

"Not she with traitorous kiss her Saviour stung;
Not she denied Him with unholy tongue;
She, while apostles shrank, could danger brave,
Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave."

And it cannot be doubted that her fidelity has its place still in the Church of God. In a work which requires so much fixedness of purpose, and so much patient endurance, her constancy is in-

valuable. Instances of its conspicuous display can still be pointed to ; and in woman's undeniable possession of this quality it is not difficult to perceive her eminent fitness for important work in the Church of Christ.

Combining these views of the female mind and heart, we cannot wonder at the poet, contemplating the good which such a nature actively engaged in the service of love and truth might accomplish, exclaiming—

“ Were I a persuasive female voice,
That could travel the wide world through,
I would fly on the beams of the morning light,
And speak to men with a gentle might,
And tell them to be true ;
I would fly, I would fly over land and sea,
Where'er a human heart might be ;
Telling a tale or singing a song,
In praise of the right, in blame of the wrong.

“ Were I a consoling female voice,
I would fly on the wings of air ;
The homes of sorrow and guilt I'd seek,
And calm and truthful words I'd speak,
To save them from despair ;

I would fly, I would fly on the guarded town,
And drop, like the beautiful sunlight, down
Into the hearts of suffering men,
And teach them to look up again."

A further reason for female activity is found in the *necessity* that exists for it.

*Necessity for
Female Activ-
ity.*

As in an engagement on which the fate of nations may depend every element of strength is placed under tribute, and every department of the service is found in its place attending to its prescribed duties, so is it in the spiritual conflict which is now in course of being waged. No part of the Christian host can be dispensed with; the whole army must be marshalled under "the Captain of our salvation;" and more especially is that portion of it required to be at the post of duty which possesses qualifications of the most effective character.

A small amount of observation will suffice to shew that this is now the case.

Iniquity abounds. It assumes an endless variety of forms, each exceeding the other in enormity and repulsiveness. It appears especially dreadful when woman yields herself up to its dominion. While grace shines forth in the female character with peculiar lustre, wickedness, as exhibited in her, appears draped in its darkest shades; and while woman's efforts to save the sinner of any class are usually at least equal in point of success to those of man, it seems as though they were indispensable in reference to her own sex. A sister's kindly voice and gentle persuasions, when inspired by Christian sympathy and love, possess a power which is seldom associated with man, no matter how devoted he may be, whose very sex is a formidable barrier in the way of his doing good to those who have been so sadly injured by his fellows.

Prevalence of Sin.

But even if the labours of the male

members of the Church were equally effective, and were fully equal to the task, female effort could not be set aside. Of necessity the "labourers" of the stronger sex are comparatively "few." Beyond those set apart to the work of the ministry, but *a small proportion of men* have leisure for pains-taking and persevering effort. Their various occupations fill up the greater portion of their time; and, in the present day of push and strain, when the hours of business are over, man is usually more disposed to rest his weary frame and wearier mind than to enter on a new and arduous description of labour. And the very hours which he might thus employ are frequently not the most suitable for such a purpose. In ordinary cases he can only give a portion of the Sabbath-day to these engagements; and other claims—such as those of public worship and of his family—require that

even that portion should be very limited. Females, on the contrary, are more at leisure just at the time when access can be had to others without intrusion or inconvenience, and they can often interweave efforts to do good with other duties. Far be it from me to excuse slothfulness in man, or to intimate that he has not opportunities as each day passes of working for God. Probably the most devoted men do not accomplish nearly as much as they ought to do, or as they might do, were they to set vigorously about it. But it is plain that man's opportunities, as well as his natural adaptation, are, in general, inferior to those of the Christian woman; so that, though he were as diligent as possible, her efforts would not thereby be rendered unnecessary.

A glance at *the smallness of the results* realised furnishes another, and a most unwelcome, proof of the necessity for

*Smallness of
results.*

female effort. As a general conclusion, it has been stated as too probable that Christian zeal is, even in our own land, not doing more than keeping pace with the population, instead of making decided aggression on the kingdom of darkness ; and the more the inquiry is brought to bear upon the spiritual aspect of the work of God, the more fully and sadly does this appear. It is to be feared that much of the activity and apparent success which now distinguish Christian enterprise, (and on account of which we should rejoice,) does not go sufficiently far beneath the surface, but has reference chiefly to the machinery by which religious organisations are carried on. The Church has yet to "put on her strength," to "put on her beautiful garments."¹ An American writer too truly describes her present condition ; and, at the same time, intimates that one cause may be the want of

¹ Isaiah lii. 1.

female agency. "The Church," he says, "has been in a winter state, in which there has been no lack of light and of intellectual splendour, increased a thousandfold as it came reflected in prismatic glory by snow and ice. But, with all this glitter, was there warmth? Were there the beautiful forms of surrounding life? No! It required the mingling of woman's love, set on fire by the Holy Ghost, with man's sanctified intellect, to give us the beauty, the glory, the power of summer, and the fruit of glad, rejoicing autumn." I am sure that many of my Christian sisters are not prepared to allow this state of things to continue, but that they are even now purposing to give themselves thoroughly and heartily to the advancement of the work of God.

By what has been said, another thought is suggested. If the female disciples of Christ do not fill the position assigned to them, *none can do it for them.* This is exhibited very impres-

*None can do
work for Christ
by proxy.*

sively in the parable of the Ten Virgins.¹ The first thought of the foolish virgins seems to have been to get their deficiencies supplied by their wiser companions; but the hopelessness of this soon became apparent as their request was met by the reply, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you." Depend not therefore, my sisters, on your deficiencies being supplemented by any such means. Each has his own work to do, and cannot supply the lack of another; and even if such a thing were possible, he has only the gifts suited for that special department of duty to which he has himself been appointed. Besides, "Every one of us must give account of *himself* to God;"² so that work done by deputy could never receive the commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."³

¹ Matt. xxv. 1-13. ² Rom. xiv. 12. ³ Matt. xxv. 21.

And, as a concluding reason why Christian females should work for God, it may be added, that *it is necessary for the prosperity of their own souls* that they should exercise the gifts and improve the opportunities with which they have been favoured. It is a principle of universal application that

"he that watereth shall be watered also himself."¹

*Effect of
working for
God on the
souls of the
workers.*

No one can even feebly try, with a pure motive and a loving heart, to do good without being personally benefited thereby. And the converse of this is equally true: no one can neglect to use opportunities for glorifying God without injury and guilt. In proof of this we have the case of the "wicked and slothful servant,"² who wrapped the talent with which he was entrusted in a napkin, and "hid it in the earth." A very effective writer says, "Christian women have

¹ Prov. xi. 25.

² Matt. xxv. 26.

souls to save, and their growth in grace is affected by the exercise of their gifts, and bearing the cross." Probably the difficulty of making progress in the divine life which many find, and on account of which they mourn, is chiefly owing to prevailing inactivity amongst professors of religion. The author of an excellent tract,¹ which has had a wide circulation, observes, "I am convinced that one great element of our moral treatment and cure, is placing us in the midst of unregenerate souls to win and save them. Nothing, indeed, is more rational than this conclusion. The arguments and motives we urge upon others return with double force upon ourselves. Every word we speak for Christ is pouring oil upon the fires of grace in our own hearts, and will make them burn with an ardour otherwise unknown."

¹ "The American Revival and Individual Agency."
By a Canadian.

I think the female member of the Church of Christ who ponders and prays over these thoughts will be at no loss for convincing arguments to repel the temptations of the adversary when he would hold her hands. He well knows that *indolence* is next in evil and danger to rebellion. It is tacit and passive rebellion—the rebellion of the stubborn horse that will not draw the waggon to which he is attached, or of the self-willed child that will not do the thing that he is bidden. Let us keep clear of it, and—whether we be male or female members of the Christian Church—let us work with all our might for Him who has redeemed us, and who will publicly and richly reward the devoted and faithful servant.



III.

Modes of Usefulness.



*Grace makes
us willing to
work for God.*

WILLINGNESS to work ever distinguishes the reception of Divine grace. Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus, who, as soon as his heart had yielded to its power, anxiously inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"¹ And observation proves that it is so likewise in every case of real conversion to God in modern times. No doubt, in many instances, the spirit of holy and

¹ Acts ix. 6.

practical zeal is by various causes chilled until it ceases to possess any vigorous life. Cool and calculating cautions are given, prudent barriers are thrown in the way, and even rebukes—occasionally not over gentle—are administered, lest, urged by the fervour of a “first love,” the young convert should “go to extremes,” and Satan’s kingdom receive too severe a shock. And these discouragements are more than usually depressing and dangerous in the case of females, especially when they are comparatively youthful. Society has surrounded woman with conventional restrictions, some of which are useful ; but many of them must prove very embarrassing to a warm, young heart. It sometimes seems as if she must almost renounce her sex, or, at all events, single herself out for observation, or else cease to cherish any longing aspirations after extensive usefulness. As well as I can, I would briefly point out the spheres in

which she may (as far as the opportunity is afforded to her) labour for the salvation of precious souls.

DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL LIFE.

It is not intended to supply a dissertation on relative duties, or to enlarge upon the way in which the several positions connected with the family circle should be filled. Perhaps this is more properly the province of the female pen. At all events, the labours of others render such a course on my part unnecessary. Yet this view of the subject cannot be altogether overlooked.

*Christianity
and Home.*

Christianity hallows the home, and sanctifies the various relations in life which are found grouped together there, assigning to each its position and responsibilities. No one can be faithful in the discharge of duty *abroad* who is not faithful *at home*, inasmuch as the law of God applies as clearly and strongly to the latter as

to the former. But I do not purpose a minute examination of this part of the subject; some general views, which seem to be essential to illustrate the Christian female's duty in working for God in this inviting sphere of usefulness, will suffice.

The presence and influence of woman is the leading element of domestic life, and one without which the true idea of home cannot be realised.

Man may live in solitary splendour, and surround himself with every luxury and fascination which taste can devise or wealth procure, and gather together kindred spirits of his own sex as many as he will; but it seems a mockery to call his dwelling *home* if ungraced and unblessed by female companionship. But while this fact may be generally confessed, perhaps it is not so generally perceived to what an extent woman fixes the character of that home, both as to its

*Woman and
Home.*

happiness and effectiveness. Her mere presence there accomplishes something; and probably a very low type of the home circle is preferable to the total absence of it; but it is a pity that an institution, capable of yielding such a supply of true enjoyment and of accomplishing so much real good, should fail, even to the smallest extent, of its design. To raise it to the proper standard belongs mainly to the female; to exhibit a goodly number of fair models of what home ought to be is the high calling of the Christian female.

Christian families should be the best-ordered and the happiest under the sun, for the gospel exalts everything which it influences. On this principle we explain the exaltation and prosperity of Christian nations: and why not apply it also to Christian families? What "the truth

Family Religion.

as it is in Jesus" accomplishes on a large scale, surely it can effect within

a more limited circle. No doubt there is a perceptible difference between religious and irreligious families, very much to the advantage of the former ; but it is questionable if the contrast is as marked as it *ought* to be, or as it *must* be, in order that experimental godliness may exert its full influence. Every member of a family circle should be unreservedly devoted to God ; and each should fill his or her place more efficiently and beautifully than they could do, no matter what their other qualifications, if they did not possess experimental religion. At present, however, we do not refer to the male members of the family circle, but pass on to notice the different positions in it which are filled by woman.

Undoubtedly the most important of these is that of WIFE. This relation constitutes her who sustains it, by virtue of the earliest even of Divine institutions, the

The Wife.

constant companion and dearest friend of him who has selected her from all others of her sex to be his "help-meet." As subordinate, and yet not inferior, she is, in union with him, the head of that little kingdom—the family, and of necessity wields a powerful influence, under circumstances the most interesting and favourable, over every individual composing it. Her position is honoured, and her work marked out, in the Word of God.¹ Her first duty re-

lates to her husband.

*Her duty to
her Husband.*

She has married him, not for his name, or rank, or wealth merely, (although these she now possesses in common with him,) but to "do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life ;"² and her first effort should be to give to home such charms as will make it eminently attractive to him—as will constitute it truly *happy*, so that he

¹ See Prov. xxxi ; Eph. v. 22-33 ; Col. iii. 18, 19 ;
1 Pet. iii. 1-7.

² Prov. xxxi. 12.

will instinctively turn to it with gladness as the loved spot which ever affords to him a hearty welcome and a tranquil joy. If a loving wife cannot make home happy, no one else can. But it is, even in the most unfavourable cases, in her power by

“Kind, fond looks, and greetings sweet,”

to do much towards the attainment of this end. To administer comfort, and counsel, and encouragement, is her appropriate province; and, whatever her husband's position may be, she can do important work for God by wisely and affectionately supplying them. “He is not only cheered in his toil when he thinks of the worth and affection of her who is to share its fruits; but in moments when his courage falters, she can speak those cheering words, and exert that animating influence, which, as the timely application of a single match rekindles a dying fire, will revive his

drooping hopes, and stimulate him to fresh endeavours.¹

In his temporal interests this will be seen and felt, and all the more in proportion as a manly confidence is placed by a husband in the wife of his bosom, and as it is reciprocated by her in a tender and considerate sympathy. But it appears even more distinctly in mat-

Her influence in relation to his spiritual interests.

ters relating to his spiritual concerns. The wife can do more than any other individual to promote, or to retard, her husband's religious interests, whether they be regarded in reference to his own soul's prosperity or to the position that he may fill in the Church of Christ.

Is he a *minister* of the gospel, his spirit is strengthened or enfeebled ; his teaching is fastened in the minds of his hearers, or made subject of quiet but

The Minister's Wife.

¹ Rev. W. Landels.

cutting jest ; his labours are efficiently aided, or miserably frustrated, as he and his family are, or are not, "ensamples to the flock."¹ It is the privilege of the pastor's wife to exert an influence—not the less powerful in the effect produced by it, or the less certain to be rewarded in the great day, because it may just now be scarcely noticed beyond its immediate range—by which he will be cheered in the time of depression, guarded in the hour of danger, sustained in his momentous duties, and made to reap a richer harvest for his Master above than, but for her, he could have gathered. It is stated of Luther's admirable wife Katherine, that, "while she never interfered in his public life, she delighted to enter into all his trials, and to disperse the melancholy which at times oppressed him." And a distinguished minister, some time deceased,²

¹ 1 Pet. v. 3 ; see also 1 Tim. iii.

² Rev. William Jay.

beautifully says in reference to the devoted partner of his joys and sorrows, "It was she who contributed to give me that exalted idea of the female character which I have always entertained and expressed. Her special qualities were admirably suited to my defects. Her domestic virtues rendered my home a complete home—the abode of neatness, order, punctuality, peace, comfort, cheerfulness, and attraction. She calmed my brow when ruffled by disappointment or vexation ; she encouraged me when depressed ; she kept off a thousand cares, and left me free to attend to the voice of my calling. She reminded me of my engagements when I was forgetful, and stimulated me when I was remiss. I mention this the more distinctly, not only to express my own gratitude, but that my church and the public, if they have derived any little advantage from my labours, may see how much of it they owe to this good and wise woman."

Or, if as an *office-bearer* in the Church of God, he combines secular engagements with his official duties, he even more largely needs her encouragement and counsel. Nor if his position be simply that of a private member is he by any means independent of her aid. Men's occupations, or the ways in which they are pursued, are usually of such a description as that they exert an influence on the religious character of those engaged in them, which is by no means favourable. The worry and the worldliness which they meet, the strain to which the mind and body are subjected, with the weariness which follows, often indispose them to spiritual exercises, and predispose them to yield to temptations—especially temptations to indolence and neglect—which present themselves; and the soothing, cheering influence of a Christian wife

The Office-bearer's Wife.

The Church Member's Wife.

is of incalculable value. In something like the language of the following lines we may suppose her to speak to a husband jaded with fatigue or fretted with disappointment :—

“ Wouldst thou have our own dear dwelling
Be a love-enchanted home ?
Spells I'll try, and there's no telling
How much so it may become.

“ Sunny smiles around I'll scatter,
Brightest still when *thou* art near ;
Use fond words, but never flatter,
Smiles and words alike sincere.

“ Round my heart I will assemble
Things and thoughts beloved of thee,
Till each wish and taste resemble
Those that in thy bosom be.

“ When the world shall wrong or slight thee,
Midst thy bosom's bitter pain,
The warmth of home shall love and light thee
To my welcome clasp again.

“ Then, with fond words and caresses,
Shalt thou, by our ingle's blaze,
Tell how all the day's distresses
One such evening hour repays.”

Scripture truth anticipates the worst case which is likely to arise—that of a believing wife united to an ungodly husband—and gives suitable counsels,¹ teaching us that, even under these disadvantages, this tender relationship may be sanctified to the attainment of the highest ends. To secure this object, however, her “conversation” must be such as is calculated to “win” her husband. In cases of this sort, too often a woman becomes first hopeless and then reckless, and perhaps “casts away” her own “confidence.” It is no doubt hard to bear up under the disadvantages and trials which ever attend a want of identity in feeling and experience in married life; but it is essential that it should be done, and the more hopeful and resolute the spirit in which the task is undertaken the easier will be its performance. A word of wholesome and not unneces-

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 1-6.

sary caution may here be permitted. It is not wise, or right, or safe, for a Christian female deliberately

*Danger of
Unequal Yokes.*

to form such a union as the Word of God condemns. The command is explicit, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"¹ and disregard of it is ever attended by serious, and not unfrequently by melancholy consequences. Sometimes affection, sincere but mistaken, is permitted to warp the judgment; but, in sober sense, is it right for a Christian to love any one who does not love the Lord; who is not made lovable by the enjoyment of Divine grace, and with whom there is not a reasonable prospect of spending a happy eternity? Sometimes worldly interest prevails over right reason; "a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise;"² but this is utterly inconsistent with the unworldly character of Christ's kingdom. In some instances a

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

² Deut. xvi. 19.

desire and hope to win the object of attachment for Christ is (sincerely or insincerely) put in as the plea of justification. But how often is this result attained? A devoted Christian female—herself a wife and mother—once told me that she *never* knew the union of a professing Christian with one not in the enjoyment of religion to be followed by the conversion of the latter, while she had met many and painful cases in which it resulted in the loss of vital godliness by the former. I would pray my young female friends to beware, and not to risk their soul's happiness and their eternal peace with the well-being of those dearer to them than life, for any offer of marriage, however desirable, which is not in accordance with the Scripture rule, "*Only in the Lord.*"¹

Closely connected with the position of wife, and naturally suggested by it, is that of

The Mother.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 39.

MOTHER. Of this hallowed relationship much has been written that is forcible and true. This is not the place for detailing maternal duties, or for discussing modes of training children or systems of education. I want simply to remind the mothers who may read these pages that, in the discharge of their duties towards the children given them by God, they have afforded to them most blessed opportunities of promoting His glory.

The *first* influence exerted on a child's mind is that of the mother. The minister, the schoolmaster, or any other

*A Mother's
Influence.*

instructor of the young, follows at a considerable distance. Even the father does not so early, or so fully, gain access to the infant mind and heart. And as it is the first, so is it the *most powerful* influence that can be brought to bear upon those of tender years. The mother's time for teaching is when the nature is most susceptible, when the thoughts are

not preoccupied with other and conflicting subjects, and when there is little to divert the attention. A distinguished and excellent nobleman¹ said some time since, when addressing mothers, "Are you aware of this, that more depends upon you, upon your conduct, upon your principles, upon the mode in which you treat and bring up your children, than on all the men in the world put together? You have them under your care, and you have almost absolute control over them until eight or nine years of age, and, during that time, what is there that you may not implant in their minds?" And it is also the *most enduring*. It will remain uneffaced when inscriptions written by other hands have become obliterated. One says, "The prayer of a mother impresses holy truths *as realities* on the heart of a child, so that he is not likely to have permanent doubts when he grows up." The remembrance

¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury.

of a mother's counsels has often outlived scenes of the most intense excitement, and has been dwelt upon with a purer joy than the greatest acquirements of wealth or fame. Mothers must have much to do in the formation of their children's character, and it behoves them, for their own sake, and for the sake of all on whom their children may exert an influence, to set themselves faithfully and earnestly to fulfil their task.

"Mother ! watch the little *feet*
Climbing o'er the garden wall,
Bounding through the busy street,
Ranging cellar, shed, and hall.
Never count the moments lost,
Never mind if time it cost ;
Little feet will go astray,
Guide them, mother, while you may.

"Mother ! watch the little *hand*,
Picking berries by the way ;
Making houses in the sand,
Tossing up the fragrant hay.
Never dare the question ask,
'Why to me this weary task ?'
These same little hands may prove
Bearers of God's truth and love.

"Mother ! watch the little *tongue*,
Prattling, eloquent, and mild ;
What is said, and what is sung,
By the happy, joyous child.
Catch the word while yet unspoken,
Stop the vow before 'tis broken ;
This same tongue may yet proclaim
Blessings in a Saviour's name.

"Mother ! watch the little *heart*,
Beating soft and true for you ;
Wholesome lessons *now* impart,
Keep, oh, keep that young heart true.
Extricating every weed,
Sowing good and precious seed ;
Harvest rich you then may see,
Reaping for eternity."

A talented and devoted female writer¹ has said,—“The training of the human mind, irrespective of sex, as it comes forth fresh from the hands of the Dispenser of life, is, for the most part, committed to woman. What a high and holy trust ! It were difficult to give a just presentation of the magnitude of this work. Immortal minds are to be

¹ Mrs Phoebe Palmer.

trained for eternal life; and all the minutiae of future life, whether for good or evil, are to shew the result of these early trainings." It is admitted that the Word of God places the responsibility primarily upon the father;¹ but in this, as in all else, the wife is to be his "helpmeet;"² and without her co-operation, both in counsel and in action, he cannot fully accomplish the design of God in relation to his children.

Christian mothers should be careful to *exhibit religion* to their children *in the most lovely aspect* possible. I do not mean that such truths as God's justice and purity, and His righteous displeasure at sin, and man's depravity and punishment, and the necessity of repentance and conversion, should be withheld from them; but that they should be connected with earnest and

*Religion
should be made
attractive.*

¹ See Gen. xviii. 19; Eph. vi. 4; and Col. iii. 21.

² Gen. ii. 18.

attractive representations of God's mercy and forbearance, of His love in the gift of His Son, and of the character and work of Christ,—of the happiness conferred by religion in this world and in that which is to come, and of the simple means by which it is to be attained. It is not wise to prejudice the young against religion by exhibiting those views of it which are scarcely true when they are viewed alone, and which must be forbidding to the youthful mind. Rather should it be represented in its attractiveness and beauty, that their tender hearts may be early led to seek and to secure its enjoyment. Besides, love is the woman's—and especially the mother's—stronghold; and in proportion as she breathes its spirit will she be loved in return, and respected, and obeyed. Avoiding the mere fondness which will indulge and spoil, she may have her soul and those of her children united in a bond so close that her image

and her lessons will never be forgotten by them.

Another duty of a pious mother is to see that her children become *truly converted* before they pass from under

Early Conversion.

her own immediate care. An unreasonable suspicion is often entertained respecting the religion which is professed in early life. It is unreasonable, because no ground is found for it either in the Bible or in experience. The whole tenor of Scripture goes to shew the advantages of early piety;¹ and observation corroborates this view, for most of those who have become eminent for holiness and usefulness are discovered to have given their hearts to God whilst young. A devoted Christian mother, whose children all became decidedly pious in the morning of life, and continued to adorn their profession, was

¹ See Lam. iii. 27 ; Eccles. xii. 1, &c. ; Prov. viii. 17 ; Mark x. 14 ; 2 Tim. iii. 15.

once asked what means she used to secure this desirable result, and her reply was in substance as follows:— She said that she had observed, that after children passed seven or eight years of age, the probability of their conversion became evidently diminished—in fact, that very few obtained religion after that age; and that when her children approached this period, she agonised for them with God, and He heard and answered her breathings on their behalf. And why should not all Christian mothers adopt the same course? How desirable that, in after life, your children should be enabled gratefully to attribute to your instrumentality their attainment of salvation, with all the blessings by which devotedness to God is followed!

“This will a mother’s heart repay,
If that loved band,
Amidst life’s doubtful battle-fray,
By grace sustain’d, shall often say,
‘Next to God’s hand,

All of true happiness we know,
Mother, to thy dear self we owe."

Instead of aiming at this, are there not many mothers, otherwise faithful and affectionate, who fear to speak with their children about their souls, and yet who would be rather startled if the fault of their children's want of piety were laid at their door? They hope and pray for their conversion, and long that some one may be made a blessing to them. Dear Christian mothers, the work is *your own*! You can accomplish it earlier and better than any one else! Set about it promptly, humbly, earnestly, prayerfully, and God, whom you serve, will not suffer you to labour in vain.

The place of the DAUGHTER in the family group is an exceedingly interesting one. She is more closely connected with it, and usually maintains that connexion for a longer time than the son. Her

duties, too, are more tender, and are more intimately bound up with the comfort and happiness of her parents as they ripen for eternity. The affectionate and devoted son may cheer their hearts by his regular correspondence, by his exemplary and prosperous course in life, and, if it be needed, by the substantial aid which he supplies to gladden their declining years; but to the daughter belong the everyday opportunities of lightening their cares, anticipating their wishes, and shedding around their path a bright though gentle radiance. This is work which should not be despised; it is work for God — work which He will mark with His distinguished approval. There have been instances not a few in which a daughter was even made the honoured instrument of a father's or a mother's conversion to God. Oh, what a blessed calling! My sisters, sigh not for rank or show, pant not for worldly pleasure, mourn not

your lot in life, when duties like these are assigned to you—duties worthy of an angel's powers, duties which are so clearly recognised and so highly commended in "the first commandment with promise."¹

The SISTER, too, has received a very important calling. Her
The Sister. influence resembles that

of a mother; and indeed, in one respect, exceeds it, for she is more the companion of her brother or sister than the mother can be of her child. Greater equality in age, united often with similarity in taste, tends to this. If she is wise and affectionate, the sister may be, especially to her brothers, a guard and guide; but in order to effect this, she must never offend him by her rudeness or neglect, or give him reason to despise her for her ignorance or vanity. A gentle, winning sister often supplies a tender tie to home, by which a young man is held

¹ See Exod. xx. 12; and Eph. vi. 2.

back from vice and from dangerous companions ; by which the force of temptation is broken, and many a calamity averted. A hopeful, cheering word from a sister's lips often animates with fresh ardour a brother's soul, and prepares him for greater effort and more abundant success. Young woman, here is noble work for you to do ! Do it for God ! Do it with all your power !

Christian women not unfrequently are called to fill the position of MISTRESS, having un- *The Mistress.*
der their care one or more domestic servants who form a part of their household ; and thus a field of usefulness is opened to them, which, if properly occupied, may bring much glory to God. By too many, servants are regarded with less consideration, as to their immortal interests, than the heathen. If they do not give satisfaction, they are censured, and perhaps dismissed ; if they do, they are paid their wages. Surely the con-

nexion ought not to end here. Have they not precious souls? And have not Christian mistresses peculiarly valuable opportunities to seek those souls for Christ? Let these opportunities be used in humble hope that a blessing will accompany your efforts. I do not mean that you should *lecture* your servants about religion; but you certainly should *talk* with them about it earnestly and lovingly. A Christian mistress may teach them the highest truths without seeming to dictate, and without giving any just cause of offence. And if she prayerfully perseveres, and supports her counsels with personal consistency and devotedness, she may reasonably expect to win their precious souls for her blessed Master.

And some who love the Saviour are themselves SERVANTS. It
Servants. has often delighted me to observe the respect with which a consistent Christian domestic is generally

regarded, and the influence for good which she often wields. From the time of the little Hebrew maid in Naaman's household¹ this has been the case. Yet there is danger of Christian women in such a position thinking that their place in society shuts them out from the privilege of working for God. It is not, however, so. It no doubt shapes their course somewhat differently ; it assigns them another department of holy labour ; but it is a very important one into which they are thus introduced. By devoted consistency of life, by kindly words of counsel or admonition, by a thousand ways which the loving heart will soon discover, she can do good to her fellow-servants, if there be such, to the younger members of the family, to persons who call on various errands, or even to her employers themselves. Look around you, my sisters, and see whether there is not a sphere of usefulness open to

¹ 2 Kings v. 2-4.

you, whether there are not souls whom you may benefit, and hearts which you can cheer.

We naturally pass from the various positions filled by females in the domestic circle to the relation of families to each other. And in

Social Intercourse. SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

much work may be discovered which cannot be accomplished without their aid, both in the removal of existing evils, and in pervading Christian society with a feeling at once genial and healthy. There are rules which propriety sanctions and enforces in this department which cannot be set aside ; but it may be suggested whether our customs do not, in general, either, under the name of decorum, require a slavish adherence to practices, many of which are equally void of reason and of utility ; or, under the idea of familiarity, encourage the undue and unprofitable discussion of personal affairs, which

necessarily slides into idle gossip or even slander. There can be nothing more entirely valueless than a great proportion of what are denominated "Morning Calls."

Morning Calls.

Profit of any kind, or even friendship, seems to be completely forgotten. Dressed expensively according to her rank in life, without an object before her worthy of an immortal mind—simply to return a similar empty compliment, and thus keep up a cold intimacy—a woman who has a mind to think and a heart to feel, both of which are placed in at least temporary abeyance, pays a "visit" to another of her sex endowed in like manner, and similarly oblivious of her endowments and her accountability. Civilities are interchanged, hackneyed remarks are made on hackneyed subjects, and she takes her departure, without having communicated or received the least advantage, to repeat, with little variation, the perform-

ance elsewhere; and probably—if she is a person of sense—expresses her gratification when she reaches home that the dull formality is over. The repetition of this cold routine must have a deadening influence which unfits alike for devotion and for practical duty. Nor

Evening Parties. are *Evening Parties* much better. In worldly circles,

the dance and song, the card-table and kindred amusements, relieve the tedium of fashion and of feasting, but at the expense of producing mental dissipation and bodily fatigue; while amongst more serious people, too often all the show and stiffness are retained, while nothing good is supplied in place of the follies the exclusion of which consistency requires. Is there no possibility of getting society to adopt usages which would give an opportunity for free, friendly, pleasant, and edifying social intercourse? It is to be hoped that there is. But if it is

to be thus reformed, and if the improved tone is to be maintained, female influence must have much to do with the change. Woman can lend a charm and ease to that which she desires to promote. Already she has done much in the social circle to discourage the grosser vices which formerly prevailed ; let her now seek to pervade conventional usages with a *life* which will make them channels of enjoyment, and with a *purpose* which will make them means of doing good.

Females frequently occupy positions not necessarily implied in any of the foregoing, and reference to them cannot be altogether omitted. In the VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS which they in many instances follow, they may become extensively useful. Sometimes woman is engaged as an *instructress*, and a most suitable employment it is—one well calculated to develop her own

*Various
Occupations.*

mind, and enable her most advantage-

Instructress of the Young. ously to mould the minds of others. Whether as the governess—forming one

of the family group; as proprietor of, or assistant in, an educational establishment; or as the teacher of a public school, she has a wide and promising field of labour. Let her think upon the importance of her calling, and—discarding those circumscribed ideas of education which would confine it to the mere communication of knowledge—let her seek to train her interesting charge for usefulness in this life, and for eternal happiness. The young women who are employed in the *shop* or *workroom* may

Sempstresses. also scatter some of the good seed around them,

and do enduring good to their associates in honourable labour, while they become thereby confirmed in holy principles

Factory Operatives. and practices themselves. *Factory operatives* form a

very numerous class, and one that is exposed to serious dangers. Let not the young professor of religion imagine that she cannot preserve her piety in the atmosphere which she is obliged to breathe. It is quite possible to do so; and the surest way to success is gently yet firmly to pursue her Christian course, recommending by word and deed to others that happy service which has proved so beneficial to herself.

Thus we perceive that, whatever the relation in life may be which the Christian female occupies, or the pursuit which she follows, no apology is afforded to her for idleness; but that each supplies both a field of effort and inducements to work for God.

“ ’Tis not for us to trifle! life is brief,
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear :
We have no time to sport away the hours ;
All should be *earnest* in a world like ours.

" *Not many lives*, but *only one* have we,—
Our only one :
How sacred should that one life ever be,—
That narrow span ;
Day after day fill'd up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil ! "





IV.

Usefulness in the Church of God.

HOME is eminently woman's sphere. In it she sits as a queen; and around it she scatters the most fascinating charms. Any-
Home is woman's sphere.
thing which would remove her from the place in domestic life for which she is so admirably adapted, would be a real evil, and should be most earnestly deprecated. But our divine Master said in reference to another subject, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone;"¹ and

¹ Matt. xxiii. 23.

the principle thus taught may be applied in the present case. With the soothing and salutary influence which she sheds on the home circle, the Christian female may combine more wide-spread usefulness, and fill an important

*Her influence
may extend be-
yond it.*

place in the Church of God. While home should never be forsaken or neglected, care should be taken not to turn it into a prison, or to clothe it with the deep gloom of the cloister or the cell. When this is done, the order of nature is interfered with, and serious evils are induced. Woman requires to engage in active pursuits for the sake both of mind and body; and if she neglects to do so, her health is injured, her spirits are depressed, temptations are invited, and in all probability her life is shortened by premature decline.

*Home does not
suffer by her
activity.*

Nor will she by spending a portion of her time in more bracing engage-

ments, attend to her home duties anything the worse. Considerable observation convinces me that a woman best promotes her family's interests by using such means as will preserve to her for as long a time as possible the energies with which God has blessed her; and for the accomplishment of this, the due exercise of all her faculties is essential. Too much domestication will enfeeble both her body and her mind; but by taking her fair share in more active pursuits, and especially such as will lead her to spend a proportion of her time out of doors, her mental and physical energies will be recruited, and she will be enabled to accomplish more, and to do it better, than if she had been a very galley-slave in her unbroken attention to the details of household management.

Now, I would respectfully but earnestly submit that some of this time and attention, which must—if common justice

is done—be given to recreation, should

*Recreation
and usefulness
to be combined.* be devoted to carrying
out those plans of usefulness which may arise in
connexion with Christian

activity. A walk or drive will be all the
more interesting and invigorating when
it has associated with it a valuable purpose
which is to be accomplished; a series of
visits will be all the more pleasant and
beneficial when they are made with an
important object in view, and contemplate
the good of others. If

*Leisure thus
supplied.* these views be correct,
leisure for doing good will
not be confined to the

young female, nor to her whose domestic
engagements are light, nor yet to her whose
means enable her largely to avail herself
of the aid of others in her household
arrangements, though, of course, each of
these classes will have a larger proportion
of time to devote to such pursuits; but
nearly all will have

some portion of their time which they can consecrate to the great work of labouring for God, and the greater the effort or self-denial by which it is secured, the richer will be the reward conferred by Him whose glory it is their object to advance.

Doubtless the arrangements of the Church of God in reference to the employment of female talent and piety

*Employment
of Females.*

are by no means perfect, yet many opportunities of usefulness present themselves, the most prominent of which may be enumerated.

There are two classes of engagements, which may be first noticed, for which females are admirably fitted—**RAISING FUNDS** for our various religious and charitable institutions, and **WORKS of BENEVOLENCE**—especially supplying articles of clothing and other relief to the poor. While men

*Raising Funds,
and Works of
Benevolence.*

may attempt the first of these, it is well known that their success is usually but small; while from the second they are for the most part virtually excluded. The importance of each of these departments of usefulness is very apparent, and the duty of Christian females in reference to them is easily perceived. It is to be hoped that they will be pursued by them with increasing energy and success, and that they will carry into each of them the true spirit of the gospel of Christ. But let not any sister in Christ imagine that, when she has

*Spiritual
work needs to
be added to
these.*

done all that is possible in this way, her work is completed. Though she may have succeeded beyond example in replenishing the Lord's treasury, and have been a very Dorcas¹ in her deeds of charity, she has as yet done nothing directly and personally for the salvation

¹ Acts ix. 39.

of souls. All this has reference to the employment of some agency or means by which others are to be reached, or to the relief of temporal necessities, and does not bring her into direct contact with her perishing fellow-sinners with special reference to their spiritual good.

But, happily, opportunities are afforded for direct and personal efforts, most suitable for females, by which they may promote the salvation of

souls; and it is well for them to make a wise selection of the work which

*Opportunities
to labour for
souls.*

they propose to do. Some are connected with every department of labour; and, as an almost inevitable consequence, their attention is so divided that they do nothing well; while others are engaged in modes of usefulness, very good in themselves, but for which they are not adapted, and in which, therefore, they feel little interest and reap little fruit. Let a

*Selection of
work.*

judicious choice be made, in doing which wise counsel—especially that of the minister or pastor—may be advantageously sought, and then let the whole soul be thrown into the work of God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."¹

In the very first rank of importance amongst those institutions of the Church of God, which invite female co-operation,

*Sabbath
Schools.*

SABBATH SCHOOLS should be placed. Their immense value is now, to a considerable extent, perceived, and it is, therefore, the less necessary here to dwell upon them at any length. But it may be observed that they supply a particularly inviting field of labour to the younger females of the Church of Christ, whose hearts are warmed with the love of Jesus and of precious souls,

¹ Eccles. ix. 10.

and who are anxious to combine varied advantage to themselves with almost certain profit to others. This mode of usefulness is largely beneficial to those who are engaged in it, supplying a powerful stimulus to mental improvement and to growth in grace; while innumerable instances have been recorded of the labours of the faithful Sabbath-School Teacher having been attended by the most happy results. By this agency the youthful sinner has been awakened, the young inquirer after the truth has been directed to Jesus, and the peaceful or triumphant deathbed has, on many an occasion, testified to the genuineness and depth of the work of grace.

TRACT DISTRIBUTION also carries with it strong recommendation.

The press is now extensively employed in the dissemination of religious truth; and valuable publications thus

*Distribution
of Religious
Tracts.*

provided have accomplished untold good of the highest description. Of these, perhaps the least pretentious is the religious tract; but though it cannot compare with the portly volume or attractive periodical, it finds its way to places where they are never seen. And often the bearer of it is the Christian female, than whom none is more suitable or effective, in circulating the silent messengers of mercy. She is often welcomed where others would be repulsed; and she sometimes finds an opportunity of speaking a word of counsel or comfort which fastens in the mind, where truths uttered by a harsher voice would be unheeded. God speed thee, my sister! I love to see thee plodding thy patient way around thy tract walk, and, when thou knewest not, have often breathed a prayer for thy success.

Nearly related to tract distribution is HOUSE TO HOUSE VISITATION. Per-

haps its aim is a little loftier. It seeks personal acquaintance and intercourse with the design of directly benefiting those who are thus followed after. *Domiciliary Visitation.* In country districts and small towns this mode of operation has, in many instances, been remarkably successful where it has been carried out with kindness and perseverance ; and it is cheering to hear of its adoption also in our larger towns, and even in the great metropolis itself, with similar results. Most who read these pages are aware that Bible women are now employed in many places to visit the dwellings of the poor, distributing the Sacred Scriptures, and seeking to do them good, socially and religiously. Such efforts are worthy of all encouragement, and God has put the seal of His approval upon them. But why should they be so generally confined to *paid* agents? Are there not thousands of Christian

women — many of them residing in places where no such agency is at work — who could, with great advantage and success, engage in somewhat similar labours? Perhaps the suggestion is all that is required by some who are already asking their blessed Master, "*What* wouldst Thou have me to do?"

In the Methodist Church, FEMALE CLASS-LEADERS find a very congenial

*Female
Class-leaders.*

and important sphere of usefulness. Of course, they are selected and appointed to this office because of their deeper piety and more extensive experience, and are usually persons of sound judgment and superior gifts. They have placed in their charge a number of younger females, with whom they meet weekly for the purpose of conversation in reference to their spiritual state, and for counsel and prayer; and I believe that few who have been under the care of a devoted mother or sister in

Christ in one of these classes have willingly exchanged her oversight for that of a male class-leader. It may not be considered expedient, it may not perhaps be possible, to incorporate this institution with the usages of other Churches. But would not many females who are eminently qualified for the task be doing good service by selecting some of the less-established of their sisters, and taking opportunities of affectionately helping them in the ways of God? It might not be done in a way so regular and stated as that referred to, but by private arrangement, or incidentally, much might be effected.

BIBLE-CLASSES and FEMALE PRAYER-MEETINGS may also be mentioned as means by which woman's gifts and graces may be turned to good account for the advantage of her sex. I regard the latter especially as being of great value, even

*Bible-classes
and Female
Prayer - meet-
ings.*

beyond that which is manifest in the good which may actually result from them. Sometimes females, through bereavement or some other cause, are placed in the principal position in the family circle, either for a time or permanently; and, if they have not been accustomed audibly to address God in prayer, they are likely to suffer the family altar to fall into disuse, and to sink, with their families, into a state of spiritual torpor. In times of affliction, by the bedside of a stricken or dying relative or friend, the aid of a pious female may also be required under circumstances where none can so well—if at all—supply the lack. Likewise, in some of the departments of usefulness mentioned,—as in visiting the poor or sick,—this is a valuable adjunct. Why, then, should she not become familiar with it? For the purpose of acquiring such facility in teaching and in prayer as may be helpful in times of family

affliction and in works of benevolence, as well as because of the personal advantage derived from them, I would earnestly recommend weekly or occasional meetings of females by themselves, for the joint study of the Word of God, and for united praise and prayer.

The Christian woman cannot be so isolated as to be cut off from all ways of doing good. Whether any of the modes of usefulness enumerated be within her reach or not, she will find

many CASUAL OPPOR- *Casual Op-*
TUNITIES continually *portunities.*

presenting themselves of practically glorifying God ; and these she should willingly and gratefully embrace. If she visits a friend, or receives a visit from one,—if a happy circle is gathered under her own roof, or if she forms one of a company congregated under that of another,—if she walks with a companion for an hour, or meets an acquaintance

casually by the way,—if she is engaged in her household duties amongst her children or servants, or mingles with her loved ones as they surround the cheerful fireside while the storm howls without,—in fact, in every conceivable position, she will find work to do for God, the fruit of which will be seen in eternity. The invalid confined to her chamber, the working-man's wife on whom devolves the whole weight of household duty, the domestic servant who has not an hour which she can call her own,—each has precious moments which may be used for the glory of Him who has “determined the bounds of her habitation,”¹ and who holds each accountable just for that amount of opportunity which He has Himself afforded to her.

And another word of moment may be added. Much depends on the Christian female keeping the *spirituality* of

¹ Acts xvii. 26.

her calling before her as she is engaged in the Lord's work. She is not merely to promote the instruction, and reformation, and temporal well-being of others; she is to try to *win their souls*. The attainment of this must usually be sought by the use of means, and it is right to employ them wisely and diligently; but they should not be rested in. Whatever the form which Christian effort takes, let its great design be kept steadily in view, and let no amount of success in minor things satisfy the soul that longs to be the instrument of communicating spiritual life.

*To seek the
Conversion of
the Soul.*

To accomplish this, religion must look *real* and *lovely*, as seen in those who press its claims upon others. No appearances will effect anything, unless they are supported by, and spring from, the inward enjoyment and evident power of vital godliness, and bear strict comparison with the symmetry and beauty

of the Christian character as portrayed in the Word of God. Thus the cultivation of an active Christian spirit, and its exercise in efforts to do good to others, will become a constant and invaluable means of grace to those who obey Divine counsel, and "sow beside all waters."¹

¹ Isa. xxxii. 20.





V.

Public Effort.

 HERE is one branch of female usefulness which requires somewhat fuller consideration, as opinion greatly varies in reference to it—I refer to PUBLIC EFFORT in connexion with the Church of God, including TEACHING or PREACHING, and PRAYER; and in examining it, complete impartiality must be aimed at, lest prejudice should warp our judgments, and lead us to an erroneous conclusion. It is, of course, a question that, as a matter of personal duty, can concern

*Impartiality
required.*

only a few of the members of the Church. As but a small proportion of Christian *men* are called to the public ministry of the gospel, or are even gifted with the power of addressing others in the words of edifying exhortation, we may suppose that a similarly small proportion of Christian *women* are called to public duty ; "perhaps," as an earnest advocate of female preaching once remarked, "not one in a thousand."

Nevertheless, it is a question which has

*Importance of
the question.* an important bearing upon all, and upon the prosperity of the work of

God at large, as any departure from the order which God has laid down in His Word is fraught with danger, and is likely to grieve the Holy Spirit, and it is, therefore, highly desirable for us to understand, as clearly as we can, its teachings on the subject. If the Scriptures give woman the liberty of speaking for Christ—of inviting sinners to

the sinner's Friend, we have no right to forbid her, and run a serious risk by attempting to do so. If, on the other hand, they debar her from doing so, their requirements should be carried out to the fullest extent. It is for us calmly to consider, if, according to the teaching of the Word of God, she is required, or permitted, to engage in such a description of effort ; or, if it is a mode of usefulness which is authoritatively closed against her.

It must be admitted that popular feeling, and the expressed opinions of some excellent men, are unfriendly to the practice of public prayer and teaching by females. These are not, however, days in which we are wont to yield unquestioning submission either to the voice of the multitude, or to the influence of name. We take the liberty, and rightly—though the right may be sometimes exercised dangerously—of judg-

*Popular feeling
and opinion.*

ing for ourselves. The Rev. J. A. James, says, "neither reason nor Christianity invites woman to the professor's chair, nor conducts her to the bar, nor makes her welcome to the pulpit, nor admits her to the place of the ordinary magistracy. . . . They forbid us to hear her gentle voice in the popular assembly, and do not even suffer her to speak in the Church of God." He does not, however, claim authority in his favour, but admits that this course is required, "not indeed by positive and specific commands, but by general principles and spirit." The Rev. W. Landels takes up the same strain, and expounding somewhat rigidly woman's position as man's "help-meet," declares, "He does not need her to mount the pulpit, nor to appear on the platform, to take part in the deliberations of the senate, nor to plead in the courts of law;" and intimates that any woman who aspires after any of these positions,

thereby becomes man's "rival." Mr Landels, however, leaves room for female effort in a public capacity ; when, in the same volume,¹ he speaks of "women who have been distinguished by evangelistic zeal in various departments of Christian activity ; *not only* in the privacy of home, or even in the comparatively unnoticed walks of Christian beneficence, but also in *more public spheres*, which are of such a nature as woman may legitimately occupy ;" and states particularly as to "the history of missions" that "we read of *heroines* as well as heroes," and adds, "it may be questioned if *the former* have not proved the more heroic of the two."

Now the exception which I would venture to take to the two first extracts is that they confound things that differ. The magistrate, the pleader, and the senator, occupy positions far removed from that of the preacher, and essenti-

¹ "Woman's Sphere and Work."

ally different from his. The former are exclusively secular, the

*Difference in
public engage-
ments.*

latter is purely spiritual; the former necessarily deal with both sexes, and chiefly with the male, the latter may be so exercised as to deal only with the female. Monod, from whom Mr James quotes largely, seems to have perceived this distinction, and hence he does *not* enumerate the communication of religious instruction by means of public teaching as one of the positions forbidden to woman, while he speaks of her as "constitutionally unfit for incessant and weighty cares, for the duties of the state, for the vigils of the cabinet, for all that which yields renown in the world." But, while we most gladly hail the exemption of woman from the intrigues of politics, and the chicanery of law, we should take care lest we carry this view too far, and exclude her from a field of usefulness from which her

Creator has not debarred her. The last-named writer refers to "her incomparable skill in cheering a broken spirit, in re-awakening a sleeping conscience, in re-opening a heart that has long been closed"—gifts which many a minister of the gospel might envy, and which go far to qualify her for widely-extended usefulness.

The leading OBJECTION stated against woman's public effort in the Church of God is, that it is *unscriptural*, and two passages *Said to be unscriptural.* are relied upon to establish this conclusion. From what there is in the Scriptures calculated to lead us to an opposite judgment, and to which reference will shortly be made, it is probable that, if we were driven to decide between conflicting testimony, an impartial verdict would declare that the weight of evidence was in favour of female agency ; but to some minds a single text, which appears to agree with

preconceived opinions, carries more force than several which plainly oppose them. However, the passages referred to admit of easy explanation, so that we need not resort to the expedient of ranging Scripture against Scripture, and balancing the account.

The first passage which is supposed to condemn public female effort is as follows: "*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*"¹ The principal question to be decided, in ascertaining the application of this verse, is, what was the "speaking" which was forbidden to woman by the Apostle? A moment's reflection will shew that it could not mean speaking in the sense of "prophesying" or "praying" in public, as *explicit directions* are given by the same Apostle² as to *how* she was to "pray" or "pro-

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

² 1 Cor. xi. 5-15.

phesy." She was to do so with her head "covered"—that is, veiled, according to eastern usage. The Rev. Albert Barnes says respecting the females thus referred to, "That they prayed is clear, and that they publicly expounded the will of God is apparent." The fact that St. Paul thus alludes to the public exercises of females without disapproval, and even gives directions for their suitable performance, is conclusive proof that this cannot be the abuse which he sought to rectify. "The prohibition," says a forcible female writer already quoted,¹ "was evidently in view of restraining women from taking part in those disorderly debates which were not unusual in the religious worship of those days." Disputation on points of doctrine or discipline—especially between women and men—would be most unseemly; and this injunction was given to prevent such

¹ Mrs P. Palmer, author of "The Promise of the Father."

altercation occurring. It seems likewise to have been directed, not to Christian females, but chiefly, if not exclusively, to women devoid of spirituality who had become disturbers of the peace of their religious assemblies.

The second passage reads thus: "*But*

1 Tim. ii. 12. *I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*"¹

Here the word "teach" is employed, and its application and limitation are explained by the qualifying phrase, "nor to usurp authority over the man." This defines the description of teaching that is condemned, which does not include that now under consideration—the declaration of the redeeming love of Christ by female tongues with that tenderness and persuasive power which they can in so eminent a degree command. It narrows woman's sphere of operation—excluding her from conducting such a

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 12.

course of formal training as deals in things which are dry and abstract ; as well as from matters of controversy, which may involve collision and strife, in which she would most likely be placed at a disadvantage, and seem to come out of her place by becoming man's opponent and perhaps victor—but it leaves to her the "marrow and fatness" of the truth in the invitations, and privileges, and promises of the gospel ; and for the announcement of these she is peculiarly adapted. If a more stringent application of the text be adopted, and it be considered that absolute "silence" is imposed, we cannot stop with public effort such as this passage is quoted to condemn, but must exclude female agency from many departments of usefulness in which it is now most successfully employed.

It is further objected, that the assumption of such an office by woman would be *injurious to the female character,*

making her, who should ever be modest

Effect on the female character. and gentle, forward and masculine. This, however, is matter of mere opinion,

and may be founded on no firmer foundation than the influence of custom, an imagination fed by pre-existing prejudice, or a misapprehension of what is truly feminine by which weakness and gentleness are confounded. Let us appeal from fancies to facts. The Society of Friends carries the mission of woman further than any religious body with which I am acquainted ; and what is the character of the female portion of that denomination of Christians? Are they not in general distinguished for unassuming and unaffected simplicity, both in appearance and manner, to such an extent as to secure the admiration of persons possessed of a correct and cultivated taste, and to bring upon themselves the feeble irony of others who stigmatise them as demure? And the

same remark applies, so far as I have been able to judge of them by personal acquaintance or by report, to Christian women of other sections of the church who have dared to take a public stand. Their imperative sense of duty has pressed them into a position from which their native diffidence would have led them to shrink. Of course we may expect that such persons are usually more highly gifted, and often better informed than others, and that they will in consequence appear more prominent ; in any position in life they would have stood out from the more commonplace around them, but there does not seem to be any inevitable tendency to make woman less feminine, or her susceptibilities less refined, in the circumstance of her being called to fill a public position in the Christian church.

But we now come to consider the direct SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY upon this

subject; and I do little more than recite it, leaving it to produce its own impression.

In the *Old Testament* we discover much that is calculated to justify the public employment of females. They

occupy a large space in the inspired history, and in many cases displayed the highest qualities both of head and heart in the positions which they filled. To several the title "prophetess" is applied;

and sometimes in such a way as to give the impression that these were not exceptional cases, but that it was an institution which was no novelty. "Miriam, *the prophetess*, took a timbrel in her hand,"¹ after the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, and led forth the woman who sang the song of victory and gladness. "Deborah, *a prophetess*, the wife of Lapidoth," seems to have

¹ Exod. xv. 20.

combined political with religious rank. "She judged Israel;"¹ and, after vainly trying to persuade Barak to go up against Sisera, was obliged, in addition, to assume military power, and to lead the hosts of Israel to conquest. "Huldah, *the prophetess*, the wife of Shallum," appears to have been a very distinguished person. When, in the reign of Josiah, "Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law in the house of the Lord," the king sent him, with several others, to Huldah for advice and direction.² In no instance can necessity justify anything which is in itself wrong; but in these cases, even this plea can scarcely be set up. It is not at all likely that either Deborah or Huldah was appointed a "prophetess," because a man could not be found to do the Lord's work. At any rate, the fact that He employed them shews that there can be no glaring impropriety in a woman

¹ Judges iv. 4.² 2 Kings xxii. 14.

occupying a public position similar to that which they filled.

False prophetesses are likewise mentioned, as in the case of *False Prophetesses.* Noadiah ;¹ and those "daughters" who "prophesied out of their own heart."² This implies that there were *true* prophetesses whom they simulated.

Connecting as it were the two dispensations together, we *Anna.* find the aged and devoted Anna, who is not only stated to have been a "prophetess," but to have exercised her prophetic office in preaching Christ, for "she spake of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."³

The references to gospel days found in the Old Testament do not lead us to expect the curtailment of any existing privileges, but rather to look for their still wider extension. The 68th Psalm

¹ Nehem. vi. 14.

² Ezek. xiii. 17.

³ Luke ii. 36-38.

contains evident allusions to the *more* glorious dispensation.¹ But, in immediate connexion with these allusions it is said,² "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it." It is remarkable that the idea here is taken from *female* heralds; hence the words have been rendered, "great was the company of *women publishers*," or "*female evangelists*." Dr Adam Clarke, no mean authority, translates it, "Of the *female preachers* there was a great host." To say the least respecting it, the allusion is very remarkable; and, taken in connexion with further proof, seems to assign to woman an important position in the announcement of the gospel.

But the emphatic prediction³ of the distinguishing power which was to pervade the gospel dispensation, is strangely

¹ See especially verses 18 and 31.

² Verse 11. ³ Joel ii. 28, 29.

clear upon this point, "daughters" and "handmaids" being explicitly mentioned in association with terms descriptive of the male members of the Church. This fact can

Joel ii. 28, 29. scarcely be explained consistently with the exclusion of women from the privilege of "prophesying." An author of some note, speaking of this passage, says, "The ministry of females predicted by the prophet Joel, is described as *a leading feature* under the gospel." The simple truth is, that the same blessed gift which was promised to *male* members of the Church, was promised to *women* too; and that for the accomplishment of the very same object. Is it not then a mistake to ignore this fact, and to deny to Christian females, whose hearts swell with love to God and to precious souls, an opportunity of giving their testimony, and of thus working for God?

And the truth thus intimated in the

Old Testament Scriptures, is fully sustained in the New. The apostle Paul lays down the principle on which the gospel dispensation is based, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."¹ The immunities and advantages of the favoured classes, whatever they may have been, are to be done away, and all are to be placed upon equal footing as to religious privilege. And as the Jew can now claim no superiority over the Gentile, or the free-man over the slave, in respect to gospel blessings; neither can the *male* over the *female*. And must we not reasonably regard this as applying to *doing* good, as well as to *receiving* it; although of course it does not imply exact similarity in the *mode* of doing it, as is evident from the directions given as to the

¹ Gal. iii. 28.

way in which woman is to "pray or prophesy?"

This principle is recognised with the utmost clearness in the *Pentecost*.
outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it actually took place. "*The women*" formed a part of the company that met for united and continued prayer in the upper room at Jerusalem previous to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.¹ *They* waited, in common with the apostles and others, for this great qualification for usefulness; for it was with special reference to the diffusion of Christianity that the baptism of the Holy Ghost was given. Nor did they wait in vain. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were *all* with one accord in one place."² Last at the cross, and first at the grave, of Jesus, His female disciples maintained their place in the very van, and not one of them was wanting at the appointed

¹ Acts i. 14.

² Acts ii. 1.

hour of prayer. And "suddenly the sound" of the "rushing mighty wind" was heard, and the "cloven tongues like as of fire" were seen, sitting "upon *each* of them;"¹ so that there could be no mistake as to their actual participation in the blessed Gift. And it would have been passing strange if they had been overlooked. But a little before, the angel had entrusted to some of them the honourable duty of publishing the tidings of Christ's resurrection, a commission which Jesus Himself immediately after confirmed;² and their willing obedience was no doubt indicative of the hearty devotion which would mark their subsequent efforts to spread the gospel of their exalted and glorified Master. No wonder that one enthusiastically exclaims, "wonderful commission! Behold the first heralds of the gospel

¹ Acts ii. 2, 3.

² See Matt. xxviii. 5-10; Mark xvi. 6-8; Luke xxiv. 5-10; John xx. 17.

of a risen Saviour! The first commission given to mortals, direct from the newly-risen Head of the Church, is now being given to these affectionate, unflinching female disciples, who with undaunted step had followed the 'Man of sorrows' through all His weary pilgrimage. Blessed daughters of the Lord Almighty! now is your constancy rewarded!" And is it not reasonable to suppose that those who were so early and so honourably employed by the Lord of life would be still used as His instruments in announcing those great facts—His death and resurrection—which contain the pith and power of the gospel?

And as we glance over the inspired history of the early church, we find indications in accordance with this supposition. *Acts of the Apostles.* Aquila and "his wife Priscilla" were the joint instructors of the eloquent and simple-hearted Apol-

los;¹ and so eminent was the position which Priscilla filled, that not only is she mentioned on three other occasions by St. Paul, in connexion with her husband,² but on two of them she is given precedence of him, as though hers was a more distinguished place. It is stated that Philip the evangelist "had four daughters, virgins, which did prophecy,"³ teaching us that it was a common custom in the Church at that period, and that it was not even considered essential for the persons so engaged to be aged or matronly. How shocked would some be now if a young Christian female attempted so to act.

The sixteenth chapter of Romans is a remarkable portion of the Book or God. It contains an enumeration of worthy and devoted members of the Church of

Romans xvi.

¹ Acts xviii. 26.

² Rom. xvi. 3; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; and 2 Tim. iv. 19.

³ Acts xxi. 9.

Christ, and in the honoured list are the names of several females, and—what is very significant—having in most cases appended an approving and grateful recognition of their activity and usefulness, much more strongly expressed than in the case of the male members mentioned. The principal one is Phebe, to whose care the epistle was about to be entrusted. She is called “our sister,” and “a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea.”¹ The word translated “servant” is elsewhere² rendered “deacon;” and it is likely that this designation more truly, according to our phraseology, describes the office which she filled. Indeed, an order of “deaconesses” was continued for a long period subsequent to apostolic times. What the exact duties assigned to it were cannot now be defined, but it is easy to perceive that they were important and such as tended to the edification of others—similar to

¹ Verse 1.² 1 Tim. iii. 8.

those connected with the office which was filled by men like Stephen and his associates,¹ and rendering apposite and forcible the directions given to "deacons" by St. Paul."²

In the same chapter are mentioned the names of "Mary, who bestowed much labour on us;"³ "Junia," of note among the apostles;"⁴ "Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord;" and "the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord."⁵ Whatever may be thought of the position of Mary or of Junia, Tryphena and Tryphosa and Persis appear to have had official duty laid upon them, kindred to that in which Paul himself was engaged, which the last named especially discharged with the utmost willingness and fervour. Mr James admits that the modern Church has degenerated in reference to the employment of female labourers. He says,⁶

¹ Acts vi. 5.

² 1 Tim. iii. 8-13.

³ Verse 6.

⁴ Verse 7.

⁵ Verse 12.

⁶ "The Young Woman's Guide."

"The Christian Church in modern times has gone backward in the honour put upon the female character. The primitive age of Christianity was in advance of ours in the respect paid to the female sex by officially employing them in the service of the Church, and in the wisdom which made use of such available and valuable resources." Would it not be well for us to return, as far as possible, to the wisdom and simplicity of primitive usage?

It will be observed that the terms "praying" and "prophesying" are frequently used in Scripture when female effort is referred to; and it is important for us to understand their meaning.

The signification of the "Praying" and "Prophesying." first is not hard to discover; it is used in relation to public devotional exercises, and implies that females took part in meetings for united supplication. The second must be understood in one of

two senses—that of *foretelling*, or that of *teaching*. The first is the less frequent use of the term in the Scriptures, and in this sense it is never used as descriptive of an office in the New Testament Church. But even if it were to be thus understood when applied to females, all the difficulties would remain the same as if the second idea were adopted, as similar means must necessarily be used to make known a prediction as are required to communicate instruction. Several beautiful definitions of “prophesying,” in the second sense, are recorded in the Word of God. “Judas and Silas, being *prophets* also themselves, *exhorted the brethren, and confirmed them.*”¹ “He that prophesieth *speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*”² “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that *all may learn, and all may be comforted.*”³ This is the sense—that of imparting instruc-

¹ Acts xv. 32. ² 1 Cor. xiv. 3. ³ 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

tion and encouragement—in which it is believed the term is applied to women as well as to men in the Christian dispensation.

Arguments may also be adduced from

Analogy. ANALOGY, in support of the propriety of public female effort. Perhaps the least convincing to those who are interested in the question, because of the general and proper discouragement of such pursuits by persons professing religion, is that to

The Stage. be drawn from *the stage*.

And yet there is force in it; for many, who strongly condemn female preaching, with strange inconsistency, see no impropriety in female acting, and even though they disapprove of theatrical representations, do not censure them chiefly, if at all, on that account; as though woman was justified in taking a public part in frivolous pursuits, which, at the best, only promote the pleasure of the public, while she is

forbidden to take a prominent position of a much less objectionable character in advancing their spiritual and eternal welfare. If woman is not allowed publicly to impart instruction, neither should she be permitted publicly to minister to amusement.

The government under which we live furnishes another argu-
ment. It seems strange

The Queen.

that we, as British subjects, mildly and equitably ruled by a queen who is a model sovereign, and whom may God long preserve, should object to female effort in the Church of God. As our governor, her majesty is head of the Established Church as well as of the State, and thus occupies an ecclesiastical as well as a political supremacy; yet she would not, were she so disposed, be authorised to take any part in conducting one of its religious services. This is, to say the least, anomalous.

But a further argument from analogy,

and one which should lead to a thoughtful consideration of the subject, is supplied by the extensive

*Female
Authors.*

and increasing *authorship of females*. What a large proportion of the books which are constantly being announced—and by no means the least interesting or able either—proceed from their pens! They range over every conceivable subject in almost every department of literature, and find a place in every library in the land. And I would ask, what essential difference exists between writing a treatise on a religious or moral subject, and delivering an address on the same theme? If such exists, I confess I have not been able to discover it. If she fails of her object, and her books lie upon the shelves of her publisher, the authoress may occupy a more retired position than the speaker; but if she attains it, the case is completely reversed. And in proportion as her productions

prove to be successful and popular, her mode of communicating instruction involves great, and sometimes vexatious, publicity. But the thing itself is the same; the medium through which the minds of others is reached is a secondary consideration; the fact that instruction is imparted is the primary one, so that any who give their sanction to female authorship, (and who has now the hardihood to withhold it?) should not object to female exhortation or preaching. Disapproval may be appropriate, and deservedly expressed in reference to those who are not properly qualified in either case; but indiscriminate censure should not be pronounced.

But the strongest argument in favour of the public labours of females is, that they have received *Divine sanction and approval*; and that this is the case is capable of *Divine sanction*. satisfactory proof, by an appeal to the SUCCESS which has attended their

labours. Nothing less than this is sufficient to accredit any means employed for promoting the salvation of souls; nothing more can be desired. Though accomplished by human instrumentality, spiritual good is not the result of unaided human effort. Talent and skill, learning and diligence, zeal and perseverance,—though each has its place, and an important one,—are alike impotent to secure it. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”¹ Whenever, therefore, this result is unmistakably attained, we have proof that Divine power is energising human agency, and crowning it with success. But will this power accompany any means which is in itself unscriptural or improper? Surely the reply must be in the negative. If, then, success has attended the announcement of the gospel by female lips, it is thereby conclusively established, that God

¹ Zech. iv. 6.

has owned it, and that it is a mode of spreading the truth for which we can claim His approbation. I would ask the readers of these pages, so far as available information will enable them to do it, to form their judgment of female agency by this rule. I do not mean that they should test it by the sensation which female effort may sometimes have produced, or the number of hearers whom it may in any case have attracted; although this is not unimportant, as it is confessed that one thing which the minister of the truth now greatly needs is some mode of drawing the masses to the means of grace. But its defenders are quite willing to leave female effort to the evidence of *manifest spiritual influence*, producing corresponding *spiritual results*. This is subjecting it to the severest ordeal—one which the efforts of many a male labourer in the vineyard will scarcely bear. Of course, causes will arise to

account for comparative unfruitfulness, some of which are quite consistent with Christian devotedness and Divine co-operation. It is only asked, in reference to these, that equal allowance be made in the case of females who open their lips for Christ, as is admitted in the case of the stronger sex.

A few out of the cheering records which we possess of "holy women," who "adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour," both by their earnest piety and their public labours,

Instances. may be glanced at, to shew that undoubted proof is supplied of the blessed effects which have followed faithful female effort, and consequently of the Divine approval and power which attended it.

The name of the Rev. John Fletcher, vicar of Madeley, is enshrined in the affectionate remembrance of Christians, as one of the few who have taken a prominent part in religious controversy

without suffering spiritual loss, or manifesting a spirit unworthy of the gospel. His scarcely less valued and useful wife, formerly Miss Bosanquet, *Mrs Fletcher.* both before and after her

marriage, publicly expounded the Word of God. Banished from her father's house when a mere girl, she had to exchange the comforts of home for an obscure lodging in London. Afterwards she opened, in simple dependence upon the providence of God, an orphan asylum, which was conducted on the plan of a Christian family. In Leytonstone, and at Cross Hall, Yorkshire, to which she subsequently removed, she exercised her gifts in public—praying, exhorting, and expounding the Scriptures. After her union with Mr Fletcher, her labours were continued; and, in each of the rooms, which were fitted up for worship in various parts of the parish of Madeley, a seat, elevated a little from the floor, was specially provided for Mrs

Fletcher to speak from. It is stated,¹ that as a public speaker she was "not only luminous, but truly eloquent;" that "her discourses displayed much good sense, and were fraught with the riches of the gospel;" and that "she excelled in that property of an orator which alone can supply the place of all the rest—that eloquence which goes directly to the heart."

Amongst the inmates of her orphan home was one named Sarah Lawrence. From the age of eight or ten, she was the subject of powerful religious influences; and when about eighteen years old, while being confirmed in Leeds Old Church, she obtained the converting grace of God. Afterwards she sought a richer baptism of the Spirit, and immediately set about working for God; so intimately are deep piety and a spirit of holy zeal connected together. The way in which Miss Lawrence was led to

¹ In her funeral sermon, by Hodson.

address others respecting the salvation of their souls, was simple but noteworthy. Mrs Fletcher tells us that she was accustomed to go from door to door in the town of Madeley to invite its more careless inhabitants to the means of grace, when she often met "reproach and rudeness," and "was brought to shed tears over them many times." "One night, passing by a house where some young persons were dancing, she looked to the Lord for power, and going in among them began to plead with them, and, in a very moving and tender manner, to express the love and concern she felt for their souls;" and Mrs Fletcher adds, "some dated their first conviction from that hour." Afterwards, "she began meetings in different places, at which numbers attended. Her method was, after singing and prayer, to read some life or experience, or some awakening author, stopping now and then to apply it, as the Lord gave her utterance."

"Her word was gladly received by numbers," and she died at a comparatively early period of life.

In noticing a remarkable revival of religion which took place in Shoreham in 1776, the Rev. John Wesley remarks in his journal, "The chief instrument in this work is Miss Perronet, a burning and shining light."

Mrs Taft, previously Miss Mary Barritt, obtained experimental religion when

Mrs Taft. about thirteen years of age. After some time

she became distressed to see so many "careless, inattentive, and unconcerned under the word," and, with the hope of making the truths announced plain to them, and fastening them upon their minds, she "began to exhort the people from house to house, and many times with tears told them the danger they were in, and urged them to flee from the wrath to come." Then

she "began to pray in the prayer-meetings," and soon after to address the people, "warning sinners of their danger, and exhorting penitents to come to God through Christ." Her labours from that forward became very extensive; and so successful were they, it is stated that "of those who had been brought to Christ through her ministrations, *over two hundred entered the ministry.*" But notwithstanding her incessant and effective service in the Church, we are informed that "she was a most devoted wife and affectionate mother. Few seemed to enjoy the sweet satisfaction of those social relations more than she. The heart of her husband (the Rev. Dr Taft) safely trusted in her; and he was accustomed to say, 'many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'"

Of Mrs Anne Gilbert, a minister states that he "heard her preach
at Redruth, Cornwall, to

Mrs Gilbert.

about *fourteen hundred persons* ;” and adds, “She had a torrent of softening eloquence, which occasioned a general weeping through the whole congregation.”

Miss Miller laboured in New England very successfully in winning souls, so that “persons who had not been to religious meetings for years, came to hear her speak ; and such was the power that attended her words, that many were awakened and converted, and became useful members of the household of faith.”

Another notable instance of female usefulness is found in the case of Mrs Smith, who laboured in Southern Africa. Sir Richard Otley, when chairman on one occasion at a missionary meeting, stated respecting her :—“The name of Mrs Smith is justly celebrated in the colony of the Cape of Good Hope. I heard a

missionary state that, wherever he went in that colony, and wherever he met persons converted to Christianity, the name of Mrs Smith was hailed as the person from whom many had received their religious impressions." And a missionary, writing in a periodical publication of that time, adds his testimony. He says,—“ So extensive were the good effects of her pious exhortations, that, on my first visit to the colony, wherever I met with persons of evangelical piety, I generally found that their first impressions of religion were ascribed to Mrs Smith.”

Passing over many not less worthy of mention, I would refer to two distinguished and successful female labourers, who in our own day have dared to bear “the reproach of Christ,” and in that way to which God, by the teachings of His Spirit and the openings of His Providence, directed them, disregarding mere conventional restrictions, have

sought the salvation of precious souls. May they and others of kindred spirit be long spared to promote their hallowed work, and ere they are taken to their reward, see a host raised up to occupy their place!

The first is the able and devoted authoress of "English Hearts and English Hands," "Memoirs of Captain Hedley Vicars," as well as of several other valuable and popular religious works. Who is not stirred to sympathy and joy, while reading the narrative of her labours and successes amongst the navvies at Beckenham? And, though they have not come so prominently before the public, I believe that her efforts have also been directed to the benefit of the higher classes, especially of her own sex, in the vicinity of her residence. But in her labours, meetings for prayer and the study of the Scriptures occupy an

important place. In these meetings, which have been attended by considerable numbers, extemporary prayer is offered by this Christian lady, a portion of Scripture is read, and an explanation of it, or an address based upon it, is given. In what essential particular does this differ from "preaching?" It is the very idea of God's Word respecting it; "So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."¹ And to this description of effort God has given His signal blessing. Would He have done so if it were egregiously wrong? if it were in opposition to His revealed will?

The second instance is that of Mrs Phoebe Palmer, the honoured wife of Dr Walter *Mrs Palmer.* C. Palmer of New York. Mrs Palmer was known in the United Kingdom by her works some time before she visited

¹ Neh. viii. 8.

it personally. They were published with a recommendatory preface by the Rev. Thomas Collins, and have passed through several editions, as they did likewise in America ; and they are still in great demand. Not only, however, does Mrs Palmer teach through the press, but also by most indefatigable and successful labour in public exhortation and prayer. Her fruitful and happy toil has been extended over a wide surface, including various parts of the United States of America, most of the larger cities and towns of Canada, and various districts of Great Britain and Ireland. And in every place God has "confirmed the word by signs following."¹ Uniformly, sinners have been awakened and converted, and believers led to seek a deeper piety, and to become more active in the service of God ; and in some instances her labours, sustained by those of her esteemed and

¹ Mark xvi. 20.

devoted husband, have led to very extensive and glorious revivals of the work of God. Can we resist the force of such evidence? On what principle can we place the ban of silence on lips which God has thus opened to promote the knowledge of His name, and whose testimony He has thus signally acknowledged?

It has been already intimated that it is not intended to institute in these pages any comparison between the mental characteristics or endowments of men and of women. The truth seems to be that, as they are of so different an order, no such comparison could be fairly followed out; nor, if it were possible, could any argument against woman's labours in the Church be based upon the conclusion which might be reached, since so much variety is found amongst men who are so engaged, while their right to speak for God

*Woman's
qualifications
for public effort.*

*Diversity of
Gifts.*

remains unquestioned, notwithstanding that their gifts may differ materially from our ideal. The statement of the author of the "Tongue of Fire,"¹ that the power of the Spirit "may be combined with any form of talent, and with any style of composition," is manifestly correct; so that, even should it be proved that the female mind (to use Monod's words) is not adapted to "enlarged views of politics and science, the bold flight of metaphysics, or the sublimer conceptions of poetry," it by no means follows that woman has no place of public usefulness to fill—no gifts by the exercise of which she can edify others. It might even be found that a more general use of her agency, leading to a more thorough cultivation of her mind, would shew that she is better adapted to some departments of the great work which has to be done for

¹ Rev. William Arthur, M.A.

Christ than man is. Her finer sensibilities and tenderer sympathies would be profitable alike to the earnest inquirer and to the sorrow-stricken mourner of either sex ; while her acquaintance with the workings of the female mind, and with the circumstances in which her sisters in Christ are placed, would give her a vast advantage in reference to those who constitute the majority in most of our congregations. The author of a valuable tract already noticed,¹ says truly, "The fact is, that men cannot preach the gospel to women with half the efficacy with which women themselves can. I can just fancy myself listening, Sabbath after Sabbath, to the preaching of the gospel by a woman, and I know well how I should crave and yearn to hear it from one of my own sex ; from one who was a more exact counterpart of myself, who understood and sympathised with a thou-

¹ "The American Revival and Individual Agency."

sand peculiarities of temperament and frailties of disposition of which a woman could know but little. And much more is this true of women. How they must yearn to hear Christ declared by woman's lips, to catch the inspiration in all its fragrant delicacy from a woman's heart!" A vigorous writer asserts respecting women that "they were the strength of the early Church, as they are the strength of the Church to-day. They did more to extend it, to hallow it, and to adorn it, and immeasurably less to mutilate and disgrace it than men did ; and to this day the love of Christ glows in their hearts with a steadier and purer power than the harder and coarser nature of man can exhibit."

A very important consideration in this matter is the effect produced on the

*Effect on
growth in
grace.*

*souls of Christian females
themselves by the course
which they may pursue.
If any one be called of*

God to speak to her fellows about the Saviour's love and the blessings of salvation, she cannot refuse to do so without incurring the penalty of disobedience. It is therefore most unjust, when the question is to any extent an open one, to place insurmountable barriers in the way of her performance of what may possibly be an imperative duty. Mrs Taft, who has been referred to as a devoted and active labourer, uses these strong words:—"Indeed, nothing but a powerful conviction that God required it at my hand, and that I should lose my own soul if I did not endeavour to save the souls of others, could have supported me in it." Is not this very like the apostle's exclamation, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"¹

It is also remarkable that the employment of females in the Church has uniformly been more general in times of liveliness and power, and that, on

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 16.

the other hand, prevailing coldness has ever led to its disuse. In support of this, the words of one already mentioned more than once¹ may be quoted :—"It is a significant fact that, to the degree that denominations, who have once favoured the practice, lose the freshness of their zeal and their primitive simplicity, in a corresponding ratio are the labours of females discountenanced." This fact furnishes strong presumptive evidence in favour of the practice.

In the remarks thus made several topics have been purposely omitted, as not seriously affecting the main question. One is the exact office which females discharging public duties in the Church of God should fill. Possibly they should, as in the case of men, be

*Connexion of
female effort
with general
religious pros-
perity.*

*Topics not
discussed.*

¹ Mrs Palmer.

divided amongst several grades, according to their respective gifts. At all events, a place in the regular ministry is not asked for them. The pastoral work comprised in it involves duties which would bring them into forbidden ground, and lead them to assume and exercise "authority over the man."¹ Neither has it been attempted to decide the question as to whether women should address mixed congregations, or those composed of females exclusively. On this point difference of opinion has prevailed amongst female labourers themselves; and corresponding variety is traceable in the course which they have adopted; and I feel quite incompetent to pronounce a definite judgment.

I confess that I have admired the moral courage of Christian women who, although well knowing that the verdict of the majority was against

Moral courage of Female workers.

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 12.

them, and that they ran the risk of becoming the butt of merriment and witticism, far more unseemly than the practice against which it was directed possibly could be, mildly yet boldly assumed the position from which some would exclude them, that they might deliver their own souls, and "by all means save some" of their fellow-sinners. I ask for the Christian female

*Liberty
claima.*

LIBERTY,—permission to form her judgment, and take her course as her convictions may lead her, and freedom to do so without being exposed to unkind insinuation or uncharitable censure. And what is thus asked for her she has a right to claim and to exercise. The gospel gives her such a right, and the increasing enlightenment of the age approves of the concession. Those who presume to decide the question, and to pronounce dogmatically concerning it, are in general not vitally affected by it,

being either of the other sex, or else evidently not called to this description of labour. I venture to speak on behalf of her, whoever she may be, or of whatever name, who believes that she is required thus to work for God, and to whom, therefore, the question becomes one of paramount importance. I ask that no sweeping condemnation should be pronounced upon her when she feels impelled to step out of the ranks, and, in some public sphere of usefulness, to seek to spread the gospel tidings. It is not likely that she would engage in such a work as a matter of mere choice, without some powerful motive constraining her to leave the beaten path. Let each case which may come under our notice be considered calmly, and on its own merits; and if proof of Divine sanction should in any instances appear, let those whose efforts are thus accredited be *permitted*—yea, let them be *encouraged*—in the self-denying and

unappreciated toil which has been allotted to them by the Divine Head of the Church.





VI.

Conclusion.

PASSING from the description of work which Christian females may be called to do, as they are guided in their various paths by the grace and providence of God, a few remarks may be made in conclusion as to *the way in which it should be done*, so as to answer the intended object. As when we take up a book which bears a female name upon the title page, we expect to find in it, in matter and in style, what comports with the sex of the author, and are disappointed if we do not; so it is in the personal efforts of

females for the advancement of the cause of Christ. We expect that, whether she is a Sabbath-school teacher, or a tract distributor, or fills any other position that has been, or that might be mentioned—that, while there are points of resemblance common to all who are seeking to promote the one great object, and who are actuated by the same hallowed motive—there will be found distinguishing features peculiar to the female labourer, in which she more or less differs from the male member of the Church who discharges a duty similar in its nature. To discuss this subject fully, would be thoroughly to analyse the female character, and to exhibit all its distinctive peculiarities. It is plain that this is too extensive a field upon which to enter, but the selection of a few prominent traits will probably be sufficient to set before my sisters in Christ, who are anxious to do as much work as possible for their blessed Master, and to do

it as well as they can, some general ideas as to *how* they may most effectively glorify Him.

The thought mentioned before may here be repeated ; that, borrowing our notion of the Christian Church from the human frame, which may be regarded as the "head," woman is represented appropriately by the "heart." Not that man has no tenderness or susceptibility, or woman no intellectual power ; but that in the one the thinking faculties preponderate, and in the other those that are emotional. This furnishes a principle which should guide female activity.

Females distinguished for softness rather than strength.

Let those qualities which woman possesses in an eminent degree be made prominent ; let them be cherished and employed to the utmost ; but let her not try to assume those in which she is naturally deficient, and in the cultivation of which she would probably fail, as it was

never intended that she should excel in them. There will of course be exceptions to any general rule ; but it is believed that the thoughts which follow will apply to the great majority of cases.

The efforts of females will lose much of their effectiveness 'if they are not marked by *unassuming modesty*. Of the female character it may be said with peculiar emphasis—

*Modesty
should mark
their labours.*

“Round lowliness a gentle radiance hovers;
A sweet, unconscious grace ;
Which, even in shrinking, evermore discovers
The brightness on its face.”

This should appear even in their *attire*. It is not seemly to engage in God's work arrayed in showy habiliments, and decked with superfluous ornaments. The apostle Paul connects “modest apparel” with “good works,”¹ suggesting an affinity between the two—the existence of which we at once

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 9. 10.

perceive. It should speak in their *voice and language*. A loud, harsh tone of positive assertion is not becoming. It declares a sense of self-importance; and, instead of attracting, repels. It should be apparent in their *manner*, which ought to be as far removed from haughtiness or display as from abjectness or servility. It should be manifested in their *submission* to that authority in the Church of God under which they may be placed—for “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”¹—remembering that their calling is to perform rather than to plan. Females engaged in the work of God should therefore, in no instance, dictate, or assume to themselves a pre-eminence which would take them out of the sphere for which they are so admirably fitted, and introduce them to one for which they possess no degree of adaptation, and thus damage the cause which they wish to advance.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

Further, their zeal and activity should be imbued with *tenderness* and *love*. Their work is, not to denounce, but to persuade; not so much to demonstrate, as to win. It is woman's "gentleness" which makes her "great;" and this applies to every position which she may fill, and may receive endless illustration in the circle to which the observation of each of us extends. Let her lay aside her soft and affectionate persuasiveness, and begin to argue, or to compel, and she at once loses her power. And this subduing gentleness, this conquering kindness, seems to be the very thing which is now so greatly needed in the Christian Church. Of systematic theology we have an abundance; we are wearied with religious controversies; but we require something that will make the truth which we possess telling—something that will bring it to bear upon those who can in most instances be reached, at

first, at all events, only through the heart. For very many dry discussions have no charm, but winning words carry with them most powerful attraction. *Sisters ! you can utter them.* Perhaps not many of you in the public way to which reference has been made ; but in some way *you can utter them ;* and the mode of usefulness which God presents to you, and for which He has fitted you, is that in which you should at once and heartily engage. O refrain not ! Set yourselves at once to fulfil your hallowed task—one in which an angel might delight ; and infuse into your performance of it a large degree of womanly gentleness and of melting love, that you may accomplish all that is possible to be accomplished for the glory of God.

Again, due attention must be paid to *Home and its duties.* *Home claims.* There are few females who have not some home duties to discharge, even if they are not wives and

mothers ; and it is for their advantage that they should. No one thinks more highly of any woman for being deficient in a proper knowledge of household pursuits, no matter how greatly she may excel in other things. The tendency of the present day is to substitute accomplishments for more serviceable training. These are good as decorations or embellishments, but they are not sufficiently substantial to qualify a female for any position in life. It is not so likely that employments connected with religion will be allowed to take the place of domestic engagements ; and yet a word of caution may not be unnecessary. The cause of God is never served by the neglect or subordination of these. Home duties are largely noticed in the description of the "virtuous woman" given by the mother of King Lemuel ;¹ and the service of God can be pursued with a freer mind,

¹ Prov. xxxi.

and to much greater advantage, when these are faithfully attended to. But much may be done to combine domestic claims and more public engagements. If either must give place, undoubtedly it must be the latter, the claims of home being primary: but I venture to suggest that a proper estimate of the value of time, and a constant regard to its right distribution and employment, will leave to every one—at least with a very rare exception—some margin for efforts which will take a wider range than the family circle. If, however, it should not be so, there is always much to be done for God within the bounds of our own habitations; so that not even the working-man's wife, who cannot command the services of a single domestic, or the invalid who is not able to go forth to breathe the pure fresh air, need be idle.

The Christian female should also en-

*Distribution
and Employ-
ment of Time.*

gage in her hallowed toil, whether it be

at home or abroad, *cheer-*
Cheerfulness. *fully*, bearing in constant

recollection the advantage which accrues to herself from thoroughly entering into the earnest and practical spirit of the gospel. If no good resulted to others,

active service in the cause of Christ is of incalculable benefit to herself, and she should gratefully remember this fact, so as to be led to "serve the Lord with gladness."¹ It saves her from a

variety of temptations, especially those which spring from the insufficient occupation of time, such as unprofitable companionship, vanity in dress, light reading, and others of like character.

It rouses her sympathies by directing her attention to the miseries and sorrows of others, and at the same time reacts most beneficially upon herself, enhancing the value of every blessing and privilege which she enjoys. It af-

¹ Psalm c. 2.

fords to her a stimulus to mental cultivation with the hope of becoming qualified for yet greater usefulness. It brightens her prospect of eternity, while it exhibits to her the possibility of sharing in the rich reward of those who "turn many to righteousness."¹ With such views as these, working for God will be to her no task; she will engage in it gladly and with "a willing mind;"

" With her no melancholy void,
No period lingers unemploy'd,
Or unimproved below ;
Her weariness of life is gone,
Who lives to serve her God alone,
And only Him to know."

There are many general directions as to how work should be done for God which might be added; but most of them I pass over, as they apply to both sexes alike, and are more frequently made the subject of public teaching from the pulpit and through the press. I must, however, say that the Christian

¹ Daniel xii. 3.

female should work for God *prayerfully*, ever remembering that it is 'the Divine blessing alone which can crown her efforts with success; *humbly* bearing in mind the proneness of the human heart to pride, and the danger which attends its insidious workings; and *diligently*, "let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."¹

And now one or two closing words.

Let none of my dear sisters think that they are excluded from

None are excluded from Christian activity. Christian activity by their limited abilities or their humble rank. These

circumstances will no doubt direct their path of usefulness, and make it to a great extent different from that which lies before those who possess rich endowments or occupy exalted positions. But this does not close

¹ Gal. vi. 9.

up your way. On the contrary, your very want of those things which give distinction tends to open your way to a larger number of individuals, and enables you to meet with them untrammelled by the restraints which often embarrass those who are differently circumstanced in their efforts to glorify God. The path assigned to you is an honourable and useful one ; it involves duties which *some person* must perform, and which God has in His wisdom assigned to *you*. If it be so that you have but "one talent," be all the more careful to employ it with all possible diligence, that He who bestowed it may be magnified.

Again, *opportunities for usefulness abound*. They crowd around us ; and the difficulty is, not to discover, but to overtake *Abundance of opportunity*. They may not be always just such as we would ourselves select ; but this should not be suffered

to damp our zeal. God knows the best description of work to distribute to each of us, and the best time to set it before us. Waiting for an opportunity such as we would in every respect like, will inevitably make us idlers when we ought to be workers, and will probably bring us to the close of our days without having accomplished anything which can lead us to look back upon life with pleasure. It is for us to do the work which presents itself, without being particularly nice in our selection, thankful that we are given it to do for so good a Master. If it is humble, or if it is hard, it is nevertheless necessary and honourable. The faithful performance of it will do some service to the cause of truth, and will receive an appropriate reward ; and it may possibly lead to employment more in accordance with our tastes.

But while these thoughts are intended for all Christian females, and while it is believed that all may discover important

work to do just ready to their hand, the obligation rests with the greatest weight on those who are to a considerable extent *unemployed*. Some of them are unmarried, and are, in most cases, at all events, free from domestic cares in their heaviest degree of pressure; while others possess means by which they are enabled to secure such an amount of assistance in the performance of household duties as that they are left comparatively at liberty. I would affectionately urge all such to embrace the opportunity which these favourable circumstances afford them to do something which will promote the spiritual good of others, and advance the glory of God. "*Why stand ye here all the day idle?*"¹ Have you not *an interest* in the great conflict which is now being waged between truth and error? Have you not *a place* assigned to you which your conscience tells you

¹ Matt. xx. 6.

should be filled? I pray you forbear not to occupy it. By heartily engaging in the Lord's work, you will, to a very large extent, promote your own spiritual prosperity ; you will cheer, by your co-operation, those of your sisters in Christ who are already labouring diligently and successfully in the service of their blessed Lord ; and you will increase the company of redeemed and regenerated women who practically acknowledge the obligations which they owe to the gospel, and thus give their emphatic testimony to its Divine origin and power. Let each seek to have it said of her, "*She hath done what she could.*"¹ *More* none can do ; with *less*, none should be contented.

¹ Mark xiv. 8.

THE END.

